

SHEPHERDS' WARNING

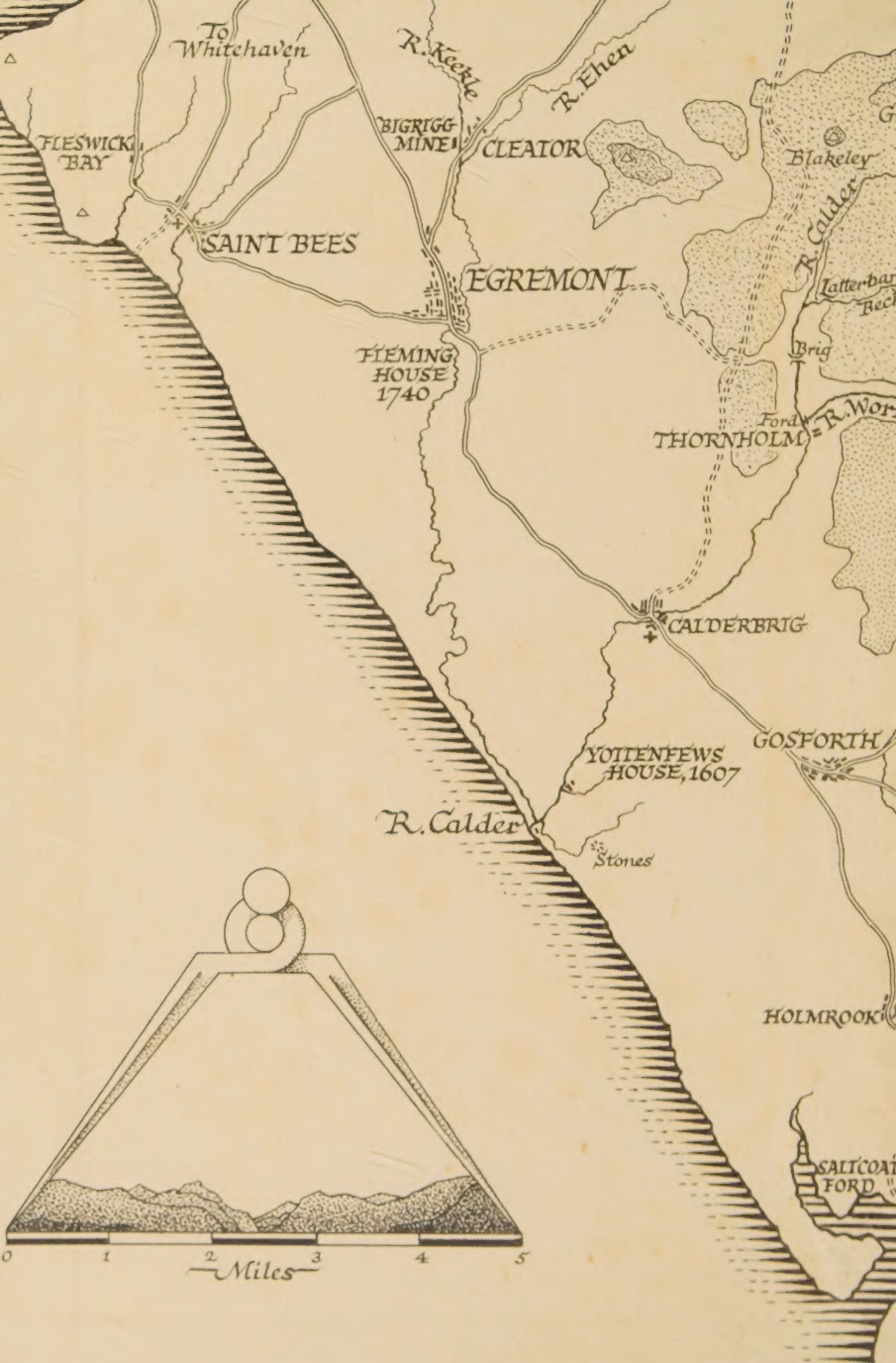


GRAHAM SUTTON

SHEPHERDS' WARNING

IN Cumberland, the 1745 Revolt had aroused little interest ; yet John Fleming rode out. "What caprice lured him off to fight on either side ?" grumbled old Paradise. "Let alone choose wrong, and get killed at it——" Nick was left inexperienced, orphaned, desperately concerned to save his inheritance from reprisals. He was handicapped by his youth, by the responsibility of a sheep-farm, by the distraction of his hopeless love for a girl who disdained him : and above all by his inability to guess if his Uncle Eldon was helping him, or plotting his ruin. He had a bulwark in the staunchness of two old friends : his head-shepherd Rothery, and his late classics-master, the eccentric and disreputable Mr. Paradise of Saint Bees. But a flaw showed in Paradise ; and Nick was tempted to give up the struggle, and to retrieve his fortunes by a subterfuge which he knew to be base. That he rejected this, and maintained his self-respect, was due to no external help but to the grit of his character.

In spite of many vicissitudes and changes of fortune, certain things remained constant : Nick's love of Calder-side ; the dour loyalty of his people ; the immemorial and ceaseless care of the sheep, on whom everything was dependent ; and the quiet fells—in snow or eerie mist, in starlight or sultry summer weather, with the sun blazing on their barren rocks or the wind astir in their grasses, cloud-shadows dappling them, and brown beckes tumbling to the sea.



To Whitehaven

R. Keble

R. Ehen

FLESWICK BAY

BIGRIGG MINE

CLEATOR

Blakeley

SAINT BEES

EGREMONT

FLEMING HOUSE
1740

THORNHOLM

Brig

Ford

R. Wor

CALDER BRIG

YOTTENFEES HOUSE, 1607

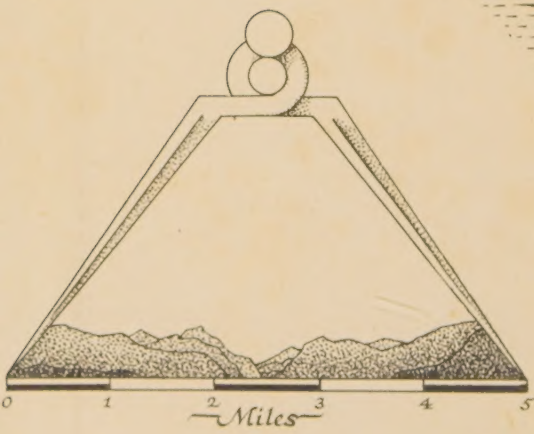
GOSFORTH

R. Calder

Stones


HOLMROOK

SALT COAT FORD





2023



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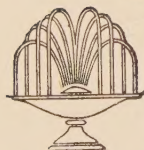
SHEPHERDS' WARNING

By the Same Author

SMOKE ACROSS THE FELL

SHEPHERDS' WARNING

by
GRAHAM SUTTON



COLLINS

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IN MEMORIAM
A. S.

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PART ONE

Yottenfews

I

ON NOVEMBER THE 18TH, 1745, my father rode across the mountains from Yottenfews to join Prince Charles Edward at Shap. He went, so far as we at home could judge, without premeditation : certainly without warning to us. Two servants accompanied him : shepherds, not urged, but refusing stubbornly to be left. By December the highlanders had reached Derby. Then unaccountably the Prince abandoned his design and returned on his own tracks. It seemed, despite his hazardous and wintry march, the revolt had not yet begun. In blunt fact, it was over.

Reach down your history books, if you want the full truth about the 'Forty-Five. You will find its fullness detailed there—though whether you will find the truth is less sure. In my tale a glimpse merely : truthful, so far as I had any concern in it, but with no claim to such detached omniscience as the historians profess. What I knew or was told, I saw myself or heard direct from participants ; where the Pretender's destiny crossed mine, it cut deeply ; his march passed barely forty miles inland from where I was then at school. Yet for all present news we had, the rebel army might as well have been manœuvring at the far end of the country ; and on the day my tale begins—December 18th, when my father was recrossing Shap with the rearguard—I was ignorant of his whereabouts, and preoccupied with a fight of my own.

Posts came slow, to Saint Bees ; for between us and the North Road lay a rampart of wild mountains. Our own roads, or such lanes as served for them, ran north and south along the rim of the sea, with no way inland but pack-routes. In summer, wool-trains plodded over these at a foot pace ; but in winter snow closed them, torrents washed them out, or they were miry to a horse's girths with the rain. We received news through Whitehaven ; and mostly, so far as doings in the south were

concerned, it reached there quicker by sea. But for three days a gale shut up the coasting ships in the rivers at Millthorp and Lancaster, and rumour was all we got.

A month back Carlisle had flung open her gates—very shamefully, most men vowed—to Prince Charles Edward's advance. In a fortnight the rebels entered Derby. Twelve days ago they had turned back from Derby and retraced their march through Wigan, Preston and Lancaster. So much was sure. For the rest, rumour spread as many tales as could be credited, and some which could not : that the Prince would winter in Carlisle ; that he'd strike southwest into Wales or northeast to Middlesboro, and there join force with the French ; that a French fleet had landed troops in Humber, Solway or Clyde ; that at Kendal the highlanders had faced at bay and beat the Duke's army, or the Duke had beat them. Most held, that since Charles Edward had retired from Derby unchallenged he would not stop short of the Border ; but no man certainly knew.

And then at last, in the small hours of the eighteenth, a post from Kendal reached Whitehaven with his wallet full of news ; we boys heard it at dinner-hour, when the Head Master called us together.

What was prefigured by rumours of the last few days (said he) had come true. On the fifteenth the vile Usurper had lain at Kendal : on the sixteenth, at Shap. But his artillery was mired by God's grace not far from Kendal, and had stuck there till yesterday, when the rearguard contrived to escape. The Duke was in Kendal now : and the much-vaunted highlanders being harried across Shap Fell, with brave Oglethorpe hard behind them. The Duke had six times their strength ; they would be lucky, most of them (here he grew picturesque) if they saw more of Scotland than her distant hills before a well-earned death sealed their eyes. And so perish all the King's enemies. . . .

Thus far the Doctor boomed his message out to the lot of us, massed in our hall, while a wind buffeted the casements. I stood close under him. For I was senior scholar that year, and rising eighteen, and due to enter Oxford University next October : and in our tiny world a person of some note. Suddenly he leaned forward, and with his eyes bent on me :

"These news" he said "cannot but gladden every loyal heart, even the youngest. When you are old, you will recall with pride the day on which you heard that a ruffianly enterprise

had been—ha ha—scotched ! To impress it the more, I purpose making what remains of it a half-holiday . . . nay, silence, I am not done.” He became more portentous ; his hog’s-eyes stared into mine ; and I stared back with a set face, for I guessed what was coming. “ This day, then, will be devoutly kept by all loyal boys : I wish I might say with confidence, by all boys whatsoever. By the wrongheaded, if such there be—by any rats, dregs, dabblers in malicious treachery, who have crept here to usurp bounties ordained by our pious founder for the sons of honest men—ah, um, where was I ?—sons of honest men ——” now he glared full at me—“ by such, for what time they may remain with us, I trust this holiday and the succeeding days will be spent in remorse for their foul misconceptions, and in awed contemplation of the ignominy to which their—ah—hero’s brags have been brought ! . . . Nicholas Fleming, I would speak with you. The rest are dismissed.”

They ran out whooping into the boisterous day. I climbed the dais and faced him. “ Well, Master Fleming ? ” he began, peering up at me and breathing into my face. “ I hope you have laid my words to heart ? ”

“ I have listened to them, sir ” I said quietly.

“ Not to them all ” he said. He was a blue-jowled, paunchy little man six inches shorter than myself, and his wig stank like a fougart. As he talked I fell wondering, for the first time I think, why I held him in awe ; and indeed looking back upon those days I remember him as a poor enough creature ; but boys’ minds work oddly, and are imposed upon by a Head Master’s rank, though it be held by one whom they would laugh to scorn as an usher. We disliked this man much, but feared him more, for the wounding and bitter tongue which was ever his chief weapon. He was saying now : “ . . . on unimpeachable authority that the man Stuart is trapped ! His rabble have no choice but to render themselves : or to be shot down wholesale, which would please *me* better for one. What fate his officers will incur (they style themselves officers, hey ?) our gallant Duke must decide ; in my own humbler local sphere, you’ll find that I know my duty ! ” He paused ; then, puffing his lips at me : “ I’ll have no traitors nor no traitors’ sons on *my* books, mark that ! You plume yourself that you are going to Oxford at Michaelmas, on a grant made by this Foundation—you’re not ! You are expelled, sir : kicked out, neck and crop ! And I wish your sire joy of you ! ”

I said : " We can leave my father out ; you are not expelling him. What makes you think *me* a traitor ? "

" Why, ain't you one ? " he broke in.

" Four weeks ago, when he rode east to offer Prince Charles Edward his sword, I could have gone with him if I'd wanted. I stayed ; I've never spoke so much as a disloyal sentence to any one, in school or out. My father chose for himself——"

" You disown him, then ? " the man sneered.

" I didn't say so——" What kept my fists from him, the lord knows : ten years' subservience to his rule, or my own perplexity, or maybe just plain contempt. But contempt was uppermost when I answered : " If I'm made rebel by my father's action, I was made one four weeks back. Why not turn me off then ? "

" Oho sir, you are glib like all scoundrels, you plead pertly——"

" You kept me because I was of use to you, as head-scholar ; because I called the roll and did small duties for you and kept order behind your back ; but chiefly because my father *was* a rebel, and because wiser men than you believed Charles Edward might win."

His eyes goggled. " Gadslife, boy, you grow insolent ! "

" Nay, you can't boy me—you've promoted me rebel ! And you've deceived yourself, if you suppose I'll beg *your* leave to stay on. There's a man's work for me, home at Yottenfews. So expel me, and take what credit you can snatch for it : and your guts rot—— ! "

He was still dumb when I left him ; I think he misdoubted his ears. And I'm sure he did not suspect, when he spoke slightly of my father, how near he came being struck. Yet for all my big words, I was near blubbering like a ten-year-old as I ran out into the playground ; for I had loved the place and been part of it, and to be pitchforked out of it like this seemed a poor end ; also I thought of a blank space there was, on a panel behind the dais—our hall was carved with many hundreds of names, but the top-end was kept by an unwritten law for boys going to Universities ; and I'd a spot in mind, where I had meant to carve my own name before Michaelmas ; and now it would never be carved. . . .

See though, how luck will sometimes balm one's worst bitterness. As I came out a knot of boys was awaiting me (my father's venture being known, and the Doctor's taunts

very palpable) and a bullheaded fellow whom I never liked began to ape the man's gibes : " Ah, um, where was I ? Lousy thieving Jacobites——" And I lashed out, and planted in his face the blow the Doctor had earned, if I'd been more high-spirited.

They dragged us apart. There was a nook reserved for fights—" Aceldama," we nicknamed it—a yard near by, with the church door one side of it, and on the other a blank wall, carved with some bruiser of antiquity quelling a great fish. There the rest made a ring ; and I recall, in the hush while we peeled our shirts, the rooks rose out of the bare sycamores with a great cawing.

He was a stone above my weight ; and in romances, as you know, the lighter combatant wins. But to-day neither won ; for we stood toe to toe and mauled as long as we could last, too angry to guard or feint ; and if one rested for a second or so, the other was glad enough to do likewise. In our fifth bout he split my eye ; and his weight telling, and the blood confusing me, he could quickly have finished me off ; but must needs run into a clinch, the fool, wasting his victory. I was no match for him with fists (I knew now, if he did not) but at wrestling my father's shepherd lads had taught me each turn of the game ; so in a moment, holding the clinch though my heart burst, I put a chip on him which sent him crashing to the flags and knocked the last breath out of both of us—yet he fared worse, being under ; and before he had even reached the crowing stage, I staggered up.

They pressed round ; I thrust them aside, and set off at a drunkard's gait through the churchyard. But two friends followed me . . . and when I came to myself, I was stretched on a tombstone, flat as any effigy, with little Pardshaw the Quaker's son slopping water on me from our school-pump over the way. He looked so scared, I couldn't but smile at him and remind him *he'd* no business at fights.

" What, man ! " says he, " the Bible is full of 'em . . . but I've staunched the blood from thine eye." And Jim chimed in—Jim who was then the most fanatical young Jacobite in all Cumberland, though his own brother had died gallantly for King George at Fontenoy, seven months before : " You've loosed three teeth for him, Nick—but lord, to think *you'd* flare out like that for Prince Charlie ! I'd not guessed that you cared——"

"Nor do I" said I, sitting up; for Pardshaw's water-jug brought back strength to my body, however wretched my mind. "I tell you, myself I wouldn't give a damn which side thrashed t' other—Scotch Charles or German George. But for all that, I think a venture good enough to win my father's sword is too good to be scoffed at."

"The heck you do!" says he. "Well, you've made him think twice before he scoffs at it again. Three teeth—look, here's one! He's gone home, lacking it."

"They lugged him inside," little Pardshaw danced, "to souse him under the font. But thou wast first on thy feet, Nick."

Soon they announced that they were going up to Loughrigg Pond, to see was the ice bearing: and would I come too? But I said no, I must ride home before dusk. So they hurried off (some more awaiting them in the school yard) and called back that we should meet in the morning; and I had neither time nor taste to confess to them, that they'd see me in school no more.

II

SAINT BEES SCHOOL lies in a dale which curves round behind the headlands: moonshaped, five miles through, nowhere very wide, its green sides too steep to plough: with Saint Bees beach at the south end of it and the port of Whitehaven at the other. From the dale, you see nothing either way; you must climb steep lanes behind the school and walk seaward, a mile or more, up rolling pastures till you emerge on the green snout of the Head; and from there you read our coast like a map—north towards the Solway, south as far as Ravenglass—flat sands, and dunes, and the waves marching in against the shore like long regiments: and inland, never very far away, the jagged lake-country hills.

My own home lay eight miles south. But my school-cob was stabled near Saint Bees, doing farm-work all week till Friday suppertime when I fetched him. So I struck up the lane, two days before my time indeed, but hoping I might find Brigadier free. And then I had a set-back.

The lane climbs steep at first, till it dips over into Rottington where the cob was; and beyond this farm lie the headlands. You can see the whole stretch of them, from here, and the way from Rottington into Whitehaven: if you look back, three

more lanes slanting down the other side of the dale into Saint Bees. Crow's Nest, we called the place ; and what checked me, as a bend brought the crest in view, was the sight of my classics-master Mr. Paradise with his back to me, not fifteen paces away.

It seemed odd he was here at all ; he abhorred exercise and seldom stirred from the precincts. Much odder that he was splashed with mud, and some dry on him, as though he had tramped the clarty lanes several hours (I recalled now, he had been absent from assembly this morning). But mostly did I admire, some minutes afterwards, to mark how he was employed. I had crossed a gap, to pass him in the lee of the hedge ; for though I liked old Mr. Paradise very well, I was in no mood for company. As I skulked by, I had the curiosity to pry through at him ; and lo, he had scrambled up the farther bank as if to enlarge his prospect, and was searching the lanes with a glass ! I hung watching. When he had traced the road from Whitehaven very thoroughly, he turned eastward ; and I could guess by the slow inclination of his spy-glass that he was following the lanes which fall into Saint Bees, one by one ; then round he'd face, and peer towards Whitehaven again ; and sometimes he scanned the headlands. At last he tucked the glass away, and scratched his neck beneath his wig, and went on down the dip into Rottington ; and I must bide here till he had passed the farm, which took a plaguy long time ; for he walked mincingly like one footsore. I could make nothing of it ; but I reflected, glumly enough, that the vagaries of my former schoolmasters would no longer divert me : and so came to the farm.

Old Tyson stared when he saw me. "What, thou's ahead of us an' no mistake, Mr. Nicky ! It's not come Friday, yet !"

"I know, John. But I've had a—holiday. Can you spare Brigadier ?"

"In course ! But thou mun wait for him ; he's away to Egremont with the missus . . . thou's gotten a fat eye ?"

It was not three yet ; and thought I, if I must wait the cob till dark, I could as well walk over into Whitehaven for more news. What we had had, came overnight by the fell-passes ; but to-day the gale was abated, and if ships could leave Lancaster, a skipper running before the wind would know more than last night's courier by twelve hours. So I told Tyson to expect me at suppertime, and set off.

You may be sure I looked for Mr. Paradise on this journey, but not a peep of him did I see. If he still kept watch on the

empty lanes, he had concealed himself ; though there was little enough cover anywhere, save the sheep-walls of turf and rounded stones which laced all that wild moor. I remained much perplexed at him . . . Except while teaching, he spent days and nights in his school den, a small high room walled with books—and paved with books, for he kept many a score of them on his carpet, open face-down. He would read monstrously, in a great stench of his tobacco-smoke that filled the room and leaked down the passage : with his feet in the hearth, and his wig hanging over the mantelpiece, and his pate bald as a bladder : still short of fifty at this time, though he seemed older to us. He was an Irishman out of Trinity ; and knew Dean Swift, just dead ; and had more scholarship than all his colleagues rolled in one, we'd heard, though maybe that was not difficult ; and could write epigrams in the Horatian style, sharp and somewhat bawdy ; and showed more wit in private talk (when he bestirred himself to talk) than any man I ever met. But he preferred books before men, he vowed, you could toss dull fellows through the window. He taught us by no set rule, rather by sheer delight in what he had to impart ; and when he found boys indifferent, he would first flay their vanity to shreds with his tongue, and then hurl them into the passage ; so that the dunces gained no more from him than they brought, and the rest worked so hard to pleasure him they well-nigh schooled themselves.

Me he first noticed, I believe, when I was put into his junior class for the *Bucolicks*. On our third day he caught me drawing in my Virgil-book : a little picture of our dale, with our sheep massed for clipping and the Kinniside fells behind them ; and beneath, in the text, I'd marked these words :

*Stant et oves circum, nostri nec paenitet illas
Nec te paeniteat pecoris——*

He asked, what made me pick those lines to disfigure them with my trumpery ? But I was too frightened to tell. So he bade me re-copy them a hundred times, and learn diligence. But at night, when I took them to his room : “ Me boy ” says he, “ you chose those lines for some reason ; do they still please you, hey ? ” And I said yes, I thought them well said. “ Why, though ? ” he pressed me. So I told him, less bashful now we were alone, that we farmed sheep at Yottenfews ; and that my father often said that very thing, in his own fashion : Stand by

the sheep and, by God, they'll stand by you ! And old Paradise sat and blinked at me. " So you farm sheep ? " says he. " Tell me, d'you flute at 'em ? " But I said no, there was no time for blowing flutes at Yottenfews, sheep were a man's job. And he said : " Virgil knew that, me boy. But he must needs please the emperor's shallowpated womenfolk, who had no wit beyond flutes ; and if the women didn't ruin him the way they ruined poor old Naso, it wasn't for want of a try ! " I asked what the women did to Naso, then ; for I'd heard big boys telling smutty tales of him. But old Paradise kept me to farming—how many sheep had we, and what breed : what wages did a shepherd get : and did bees swarm because you beat a gong at them, as the poet stated ? And when I was answering, as often as not he'd start off on something else. Yet one question I did put to him : if it was true, as some of our old shepherds told, that Julius Caesar brought sheep to England first ? And he said aye, like enough he did, for our Herdwicks had Roman noses ; whereat both of us laughed.

And from that night, so far as he showed favour to any one, Mr. Paradise used me kindly. Yet though I knew him pretty well, I was no nearer guessing why he should patrol the lanes to-day with his spy-glass. It seemed mightily odd.

III

AT WHITEHAVEN they told me a schooner out of Lancaster was due these thirty hours ; and since the tempest had dropped, they supposed she'd have cleared by dinnertime and be in on the tide. But that was not till ten o'clock, so I must kick my heels five hours longer : and little enough to see in Whitehaven even by daylight, save coals and fish. The town lies snug in the north end of that long valley I spoke of, which divides the Head from the inland ; and near, in the green bosom of the Head itself, they have dug drifts to win the coal which they export from Whitehaven in great plenty, many a hundred ton a week I dare say. These they shore up, and lay wooden rails for their coal-sleds which bairns must haul, toiling in darkness. And so deep do their drifts run, they bore air-shafts to sweeten them, or the foul gases rot the very timber itself, to say nothing of the danger to men's lives : which troubles the owners less. For wood grows dearer yearly because of its scarcity, but colliers are

cheap. Inland the country climbs towards Cleator, where iron ore is dug out. So that by night the streets of Whitehaven are thronged with both sorts of miners, black men and red men, and with sailors who load their wares ; more gin and ale are drunk in Whitehaven, I suppose, than in all Cumberland put together ; and often their factions fight.

I ate my supper at an inn near the waterside, which master-mariners used and where the rowdier sorts were less welcome. Here I met an old Parton skipper : who informed me, a press-gang came ashore five nights ago with no profit ; for the young fishermen they wanted were warned, and had made themselves scarce. The gang found no one in the place but colliers, not worth the pressing ; and when these perceived how they outnumbered the gang, they mobbed them, and pelted them with lumps of coal and chased them back to their ship. " So they've their bellyful " says my captain, " and this port is quit of 'em for awhile ! " He had some errand to the schooner I waited for. About eight, we walked on the jetty : and none too soon, for she'd come under all the sail she dared while the storm blew itself out ; and here she was, bearing right in for us, under one foresail bellying and her bow-wave silvery in the moon. She was two hours before her time, but she ran straight for the channel : " Six inch o' watter beneath her keel, and no more " my friend said. And a brave sight it was, as she flashed in below the beacon, to see her canvas crumple down with the blocks screaming, and a flung line go snaking out to the men on the pier-head ; they leapt, and turned it round a bollard and lay on it, and warped her in to the quay.

My friend took me aboard her : where, in her cabin below the poop, we were told the rebel-news. All yesterday Charles Edward's highlanders had laboured over Shap moor, dragging their guns ; and to-day just before the schooner sailed, a post brought word that the Duke was hard on their heels, and would force a fight above Penrith ; or if not there, in the flat country by Carlisle ; that the Duke much outnumbered them ; and if the bastards ever saw their homes again, then the devil was in it . . . I listened, keeping a dead face ; for ruinous though these tidings were, they were no worse than I'd expected.

By and by the two captains rolled off to the inn, bidding me a cock-a-lilty good-night. My way back lay through the purlieus of Whitehaven, and by dark I fancied it very little ; so I kept seaward, up the Head. It was now half-past eight ; and I

mused, I had stayed so long for the ship, old Tyson would be abed ere I could reach him. I had no heart to knock him up, nor to lie wakeful thinking of the peril my father was in ; I resolved rather to prolong my walk and tire myself, following the cliff-edge, and to sleep in Tyson's barn until day.

It was dead-still up here, with a white frost : the gale blown out, and a shore-mist beginning to creep over the low parts of Whitehaven. I could catch their drunk babel rising through the blanket of mist, and sometimes a dog barking : but here no sound, till I came to the brink and heard the tide swish-swish along the hidden beach very quietly, as though the sea breathed in its sleep. There was moonlight enough for me to skirt the edge, which I found smoother walking than the moor, with less chance to get lost ; till at last it dipped sharply, and I knew I was close on Fleswick Cove between the north and south heads. We used to walk here from school on summer evenings, but I had never seen it by night ; so I turned inland towards its upper end where the rock-walls become steep grass : and slid down—but on my bottom most of the way, since my school shoes had no nails to them—and began to grope my way to the beach. Here were tall cliffs on either hand, no moonlight spilling into so strait a place, and for pathway a little beck among boulders. Then the gill bent, and there was moonlight in the gap just ahead of me . . . and I stood stiff with wonder at the strangest sight of my life.

A great ship lay in the cove, a barquentine by the rig of her, so close that she seemed high above shore-level, riding on air : stern-on, and some of her sails squared and hanging flat, not a breath stirring them : and what was eeriest, with no poop showing beneath. For the mist filled the cove, to about my own level where I stood ; and from me forth into the empty night there was nothing but that gray blanket, and the gray slender pyramid towering out of it, like a sea-ghost. But soon I heard the dip of oars and a prow grounding on shingle : and another, and more yet, left and right along the beach as though the Frenchies were landing. Then I remembered how the gang had come ashore last week and gained nothing, and at once all seemed plain ; they had hung-off, hove-to till the gale spent itself, resolute to snatch their quota ; and were now back in force, to march from Fleswick and surprise the lads of Whitehaven from their rear ! As this flashed through my mind there was a rush of feet on the shingle, and the first dozen of brawny forms came plunging out

of the mist. I turned, and stumbled up the gill again, my heart pounding.

Had they seen me? I thought not; I had much to see the rocks in my way. Soon I was back where the steep grassy banks began, but dared not climb out by them—partly for my slape shoes, but more for the moonlight; if I kept in the beck, the shadows favoured me still. So I did that, not pausing to look back, but convinced by the noise which echoed up the gill that the whole ship's company must have landed. And though I gained, they seemed to follow quick enough once they were over the rough ground, and far too close for my comfort; also I knew that in another fifty yards, at the gill-head, I should come out in full view . . . and then I thought of the mine.

It was an old drift—we had often peered in it and tried to pick the lock of its grille; but the grille stood well back, so that the drift-mouth formed a little cave or bear-hole (as they are called) smothered in brambles; a place that you could miss very easily, even by day. I swerved in and crouched against the grille, my heart thumping like a paddle-wheel; but to my terror, in a second or two, someone pushed through the brambles and came stumbling after me, and his groping hand touched my face. At once he ripped out a spatter of oaths, and called to his fellow who came next, and both laid hold of me. Then more leapt in, and one unmasked a lantern from his coat-skirts; and a voice cried—a Manxman's by the sound of it—"A spy, begod! Slit his throat!"

I saw their knives in the lamplight; and sang out as boldly as I could, though that was feebly enough: "No need to slit it, I'll come with you!"

Says he: "The devil you will——?" as though I astonished him; and turned, calling to those who were still gathering outside: "The scout! Pass the word for that——scout! Tell 'am he's wanted——" Then there was some delay; and presently, outside the bear-hole, a wheezing; and the Manxman at once began to abuse some fellow in the gill very scurvily, with such a spate of oaths as I never heard in my life. A fine watch to keep, said he: a pretty, gentleman's watch: and for two pins he'd strangle his fat neck in that lubberly cravat he was wearing. And then the newcomer was hustled in and set facing me, and I could only stare in amazement. For it was none but my old Mr. Paradise, much out of temper and breath.

I could have laughed though, had I been less scared, to see

how he turned on them. "Spy?" says he. "Rot you all, he's no spy! I left him to watch the drift——" And to me sternly: "How did you not tell them, me boy?" But he gave me no time to answer, which was as prudent. "Come come, we'll have no more of this tomfoolery, if you please!" he snapped. "Do you get on with your work!" And I laughed now outright, to hear him order those great swearing men about like boys in a classroom. They obeyed, too; he had unlocked the grille, pressing close and nudging me, which I took for a sign not to speak; the Manxman led with his light; and the rest, carrying great packs as I now saw, trooped after it down the bear-hole. "Gangway, me boy!" ordered Mr. Paradise. "We are incommoding these persons——" So we stepped out to the gill.

I thought their procession would never end. There must have been a hundred or more, scrambling and grunting up the steep ascent with their loads, then scuttling down the drift at a run, as though the devil were after them. They brushed close by us; and before I dared speak, the first-comers were streaming out again to clatter back down the gill. But in a while the drift emptied. Mr. Paradise took my arm. "Me boy" says he, "this nipping eager air is no place for the gouty; let us indoors." I caught his tails as he ducked through the brambles. "Smugglers——?" I gasped. "Why yes, what else did you suppose them: angels?" says he. I whispered, a press-gang. But he said nothing, only fell into a great laugh as he waddled in front of me, wagging his head.

They had set lanterns in the drift; and before long we reached a cave, hewn out of shaly-looking rock to the size of a barn, with columns left to bear the roof like huge tree-trunks; more lanterns here, and the men's packs laid out against the farther wall, very orderly. They were in pairs, with rope slings, so that each smuggler carried two, fore-and-aft. Mr. Paradise began counting. "Twelve score—and what a dickins fetches *you* here, you're out of bounds, sir!" he said. But before I could answer him, the smugglers came crowding back. Now they brought kegs: a hundred couple, we counted when they were gone again, and some more bales. But on the next shift there were only seventy men, with the Manxman.

Mr. Paradise doffed his hat, to find the spectacles which he wore tangled in the crown of his wig. Then he pulled out a paper. "*Consummatum est?*" says he. "You are finished?"

"Aye, aye, sir" the Manxman said.

"Five salt-kegs short!" rapped out Mr. Paradise.

"Nay sir, you've miscounted."

"Five short" says he. "Pray send down for 'em."

At this the Manxman began blustering, and swore that Paradise had called him a liar; and Mr. Paradise smiled very affably, and said why yes, so he did: because arithmetick was arithmetick. "Me friend" says he, with his head cocked to peer at him over the spectacles, "your money is waiting in Douglas; but you'll not see a poxy crown of it unless your tally is signed, as you well know." And when the Manxman loosed another string of oaths and talked of slitting his gullet: "If you perform such surgery" says he, "you'll still be five kegs short and no tally: and what's far worse for you, no more trade." So in the end the Manxman sent three fellows back, cursing them to make haste: and vowing, if he stayed longer on the ebb, his ship was like to be stranded. "That would be most unfortunate indeed" commented Mr. Paradise, "for five kegs!"

But the kegs soon arrived and Mr. Paradise signed the tally, and we stepped down to watch the ship away: to speed the parting guest, as he said. Only the mist was thicker now, and we got no sight of her, nor any sound except the slow swell whispering along the beach and the boats' oars, dwindling: nor any breath of wind. I wondered how they would do; but I suppose the five boats towed her out to sea, or for aught I know, round to Whitehaven; for after some muffled shouting, we heard the symphony of the boats' oars begin again, and continue long past such time as it would have taken them to come alongside the ship.

And that was the first cargo ever I saw run; but not the last, nor the strangest.

IV

I INFERRED NOW, we'd make for home. But Mr. Paradise toiled grunting up to the bear-hole again, and locked the gate on us from inside. "*Artis est celare artem!*" he reminded me, and led back into the cavern where the smugglers had left one lamp. "What think you of this night's pic-nic, hey?"

I said: "I think you saved my life——"

"You may live to curse me for that. Meanwhile, I hope you'll have a dutiful regard for my own?" I missed his point,

so far was I from any thought of ever blabbing his secret ; but he went on very cheerfully : " Rot my gray hairs though, I wasn't born to be hanged ! Smuggling is obsolete, they tell me, along this coast—which makes it easier."

I understood him still less. It was common talk, at school and among our shepherds, that the running-trade had declined these five years. In old times the Isle of Man supplied our coast very liberally with tea and tobacco, linen and lace from France, muslin from the West Indies : and above all with brandy. Now such traffic seemed dead. You might have doubted it, to see the drunkenness in Cleator and Whitehaven ; none the less gossip held that the smugglers were out of business ; and to us boys already they were half-legendary, like the Rebellion of '15. Myself to-night as I fled up the gill, I never dreamed that the men clattering after me were anything but a press-gang. Now I was past wonder . . . Says Mr. Paradise :

" With the cats lulled to a false security—the excise-cats, I mean—shrewd mice may play. But they must *be* shrewd ! " He quizzed me over his spectacles, for all the world as though he had me in school. " What made Rome great, me boy ? I've told you a score of times : method ! The old running-trade had no method ; they'd sail a lugger into Fleswick or Raven-glass—a poor piddling little venture, fifty pounds' worth or less : and to meet her, a few ponies. And maybe she'd miss her tide or be weatherbound. So by the time the ponies got away (after much altercation, beastly whinnys and other public advertisement) the excisemen would be warned. But we've changed that ! " He waved his pipe at the stacked goods which filled our cave to its roof. "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*, begad ! "

I sat, waiting enlightenment. He refilled his pipe, and went on : " Method, hey ? A good-size ship, crammed : porters so numerous they can hardly stand on her deck : no convoy loitering at the beach to advise all Cumberland : and the work done—in how long ? Did ye time them ? I did, though : that's part of my trade. Thirty-six minutes and no more, from the first grounding. Method, me boy ! "

" And now ? " said I. Mr. Paradise shrugged.

" *Festina lente* ! An interim, till 'tis sure nothing's known : and the next move at leisure . . . but what the plague were *you* doing here ? " he asked so suddenly that I jumped.

I told him that I was going to Rottington, and then home.

" Not till broad day, rat you ! I've my good name to think

about, if you've not." But indeed I was well content to be here with him. "You grin?" says he, watching me.

"I've heard, my uncle brags that it is through his vigilance the smugglers have been put down——" Mr. Paradise raised his eyebrows.

"Your Uncle Magistrate, you mean? Your good uncle, the cat!" And he laughed till his belly shook. But I was worse fogged than ever . . . My father's brother, Mr. Eldon Fleming of Egremont, was a man of consequence in these parts: a prosperous ironmaster: a sound party-man: churchwarden, justice of the peace. And from all I could hear, his brag that he had harried the running-trade out of Cumberland was quite true. Yet the trade seemed to be doing pretty well, this December evening in Fleswick; and unless I misunderstood Mr. Paradise, my uncle was thanked for that?

He said, chuckling still: "Your uncle believes in method, like other wise men since Rome. He knows you can't catch traders by chasing them; anticipation's his gambit. So he has spies at each port, both in Man and in Cumberland; and with his brains to compensate the excisemen's stupidity, the smugglers are at a *non plus*."

"But—spies cost money?"

"He's content to find that."

"From his own purse?" I stared.

"Where else?"

"But his trade's iron! How could smuggling hurt him?"

"Me boy, in these days a man must stand well with the Government, especially if he's in trade. Who got the contract for those guns they haled to Carlisle, three months back? Your Uncle Ironmaster. Who fixes mining-wages by law? Your Uncle Magistrate. Who'll fish the muddy troubled waters of politics, when Mr. Chancellor Pelham has preserved the country again and restored the *status quo* (if he does) and the rewards and vengeance are doled out? Why, that fox, that sound party-man your uncle, whose zealous services *et caetera* . . . I hope you're in his good books?"

I said: "I've not seen him these four years. He does not visit at Yottenfews."

"No, he's preoccupied with more important folk than his relations, I'll lay. But keep in with him, you'll be wiser."

"Yet I'm still wondering" said I, curiosity driving me, "how his zeal against smugglers can——"

“Further this night’s work? That is very simple indeed. Spies are two-edged weapons. Let the head-spy be paid a double fee—hey, d’ye follow me? Besides, your uncle’s success has made the excisemen over-confident; they sleep sound, unless they are plainly warned. Betting is not my art; but I’d have gauged the odds at twenty-thousand to one against being interrupted this evening—method, me boy! And again, lest some two-edged weapon should prove three-edged and the dragoons be posted to Fleswick—well, these bare moorland lanes are easy watched, by one of incorruptible corruptibility: such as me.”

“I said: “It must cost your friends a pretty penny, this two-edge trade.”

“It does, it does.” He glanced round him. “How much d’ye reckon to-night’s cargo is worth, though?”

“A hundred pounds?” said I at random. And he did not correct me; only I heard him murmur “*Sancta simplicitas!*” under his breath . . .

For awhile, I think, he talked on; I was too dead-weary to mark him. My spirit burned to hear more of these strange doings into which I had stumbled; only my troublous afternoon, and the walk into Whitehaven, and now this adventure, quite vanquished me; the flesh must needs have its way. I recall Mr. Paradise enjoining me to lie back along some bales, and covering me—with his own coat, I found after; and when I awoke, our lamp had died and I heard his voice in the dark declaiming: “*Aurora interea miseris mortalibus almam extulerat lucem . . . Up, wretched mortal! Dawn’s outside, we must stir—*”

It was chill in the cave, and the air rank with his tobacco-smoke and the damp bales and tarry reek of the smugglers: but outside, keen as a knife. He locked the grille, and we went down in twilight to the beach where the tide was half-in; so that we should have time enough to walk back below the cliffs, and risk no encounters. The sky was clear, the sea very dead and gray with a long swell; and since high-water there had been a flurry of snow, which lay like foam on the rocks. We set out to pick our way round the great wrinkled bastion of red stone between Fleswick and Saint Bees, with the gulls screaming. We were cold; hasten as we would; and for my part the thrill of the adventure had waned in me, leaving me ashamed, because for hours I had thought nothing of the peril my father was in, but only of my small interests; now my anxiety for him came

back, gnawing me, with the remembrance of the bitter news which the schooner had brought. Old Mr. Paradise kept mum because the rough going taxed him ; he was sweating, when we had walked a mile or more round the south head ; when the bay opened, and a pale sun first greeted us, I looked back and saw him seated on a rock, with wig and hat in either hand and his pate steaming. I returned to him.

"Forward !" says he. "You'll be late for first-school, which I'll not have——" And when I said there was no school to-day for me, he asked what the devil I was talking about, very sharply. So I told him what sentence the Head Master had decreed against me, and why.

I never saw a man so put out. First he sat dumb ; then he let loose some most stupendous oaths, which I thought he must have learned from the smugglers ; for though our shepherds often swore very lustily, they were infants to him. At last he said what I had told the Doctor myself, that my father had been a rebel four weeks back.

"But not defeated" said I.

"Tut, your Charles Edward's goose was cooked when he quit Derby ! *Alea jacta est* . . . He expects a bishoprick, d'ye know that ?"

"Charles Edward !" I exclaimed ; and old Paradise burst out laughing. But his face was grim enough as he went on :

"Our Head Master, boy ! The see of Carlisle, no less. The Prince ordained one of his own, so a vacancy will be imminent. But a good party-man they needs must have, in *this* diocese ! So he unfurls his banner—at your expense, since each small detail may further him. Gadslife, a filthy world ! And you—I suppose you'll turn Jacobite for this, if you're not one already ?"

"Oh, what do I care !" I broke out. "'Tis my father's danger I'm thinking of. If they take him——"

"He'll hang" said Mr. Paradise. "And if they've not taken him, he'll hang later . . . nay boy, that's a hard word to say to you ; but facts are facts. He owns land ; and he's well thought of, hereabouts ; a man marked out to be made an example of——" He drew me down by him, on the rock. "Nicky" says he—and he had never called me that, always "you, Fleming," or "me boy" ; for he'd have no favourites. "Nicky, I doubt your father left a rod in pickle for you, when he rode over the hill."

"Never mind me" I said. "O sir, counsel me ! If the Duke

closes with them—they say he must scatter them on Shap—and my father eludes capture——”

“Why, he’ll take to his native heath” Mr. Paradise comforted. “Think man, he has ten thousand times the hope of these highlanders, severed from their own kin! You’ll find he’ll join you at breakfast, one of these fine days; and then you must smuggle him abroad . . . Money, hey?”

“There’s money at home; or I could sell stock. But where? To the Island?”

He mused. “*Est in conspectu Tenedos*—aye, in Man they’ve their own king and their own law; and I’ve friends there, as you’ve discovered. If he’s not taken yet . . . I’m more troubled for you, Nicky; the school’s your world, you think your catastrophe begins and ends with this pettifoggery of expulsion——” But I thought no such thing. I knew that my world was my father’s world: the old sheep-farm at Yottenfews, whose loss would break his heart and mine. And I knew his escape would seem to him of no consequence, if Yottenfews went to strangers; and meanwhile, even if he did escape and nothing were done against us, the farm-work could not mind itself, and there was none to rule it but me.

“I must get back” said I, rising.

“To your sheep?”

“Aye. Our ewes will lamb, whether my father be home, or—otherwise.” He rose too, and laid hands on me.

“Forgive me, Nicky; I thought you were still a boy. I was mistook. So get home; be circumspect; put money in thy purse, as the poet counsels. And above all enlist that uncle of yours; he can save Yottenfews as no man else—if he wants to.”

He clapped on wig and hat, and we went forward towards the little bay past the headland. When we reached where the beck comes out of Rottington, he stood and nodded at me two or three times, bidding me farewell: “And for my friendship—it’s yours for what it’s worth. We honest men must stand together these days; ’tis by miracle we survive.” He waddled across the shingle; when he had gained the grass, I saw him pull out a book and fall studying it—his Tully, I guessed, which we were due to construe that day.

So he passed out of sight, and I walked up the beck towards the farmstead.

V

OLD TYSON crossed the yard while I saddled Brigadier. "What, ye're back then?" he frowned. "Last night, I expectit ye."

"I lay in Whitehaven" I told him. "The schooner came on the flood."

"Aye. Flood was ten o'clock——" He stood watching me very dourly. "Whitehaven's no spot to be spendin' nights—and forbye ye're ower young to go wenchin'. What wad your father say!" But I felt older than fifty years, with the responsibility that was thrust on me; and I cared little whether he supposed I had been wenching or not, so long as I hid the truth. I made no answer; and after staring at me a while, he went on: "Did ye get news on him?"

"No news of anything but the rebels are crossing Shap into Penrith, and the Duke's not up with them yet."

"Maybe no news is best" he nodded, and asked no more questions. He was like most of the estatesmen of these parts, he favoured neither side; but I knew that he loved my father. His grandson worked for us, young Ned Tyson of Calderbrig: and was gone with my father and the Prince a month ago, taking no denial. "God send ye'll find warmer comfort at Yottenfews" he said sombrely. Just then his wife came bustling out with bread and cheese she'd made up for me; and presently I rode off.

At first I followed the sands; but before long the tide was edging me on to shingle, so at the next cart-gap I left the beach and took to the grass dunes. Ten miles inland, snow fringed the tops of all the barrier of ragged fells which encloses us—from Black Combe over Ravenglass, by Wasdale and Ennerdale, till at last they slope down towards Solway where the Plain of Cumberland curves north-east. One vast wall, they make: a swart wall, or a green-and-purple wall, or gray-shadowy, for it keeps changing with the weather; and sometimes clouds blot it out. But to-day it was bright and hard and very blue like an old woman's eyes, beyond the buff of the foothills.

You might suppose no traffic could cross that wall. Yet there are gaps: I saw the start of one straight ahead of me, ten miles south-east, where the packroute lifts over Irton Fell. Up there lie two steep passes end-to-end, Hardknott and Wrynose,

leading to Ambleside : and beyond Ambleside into Kendal. Our wool went that road each summer, forty miles to Kendal Fair, three days' march : with the beasts roped in a long plodding line, tail to halter. There was a nearer way inland, by Sty Head to Borrowdale, nineteen miles ; but this led only into Keswick, a poor mean village as I heard, where we had no dealings. And a third way (if you could call it a way) from the head of Ennerdale valley, which shepherds alone used.

Yet it was towards the foothills below Ennerdale that I kept glancing, more than once as I rode. Three miles off lay Egremont, where my uncle had built himself a fine great ugly modern house that cost him twelve hundred pound. I had been inside it four years ago, when I rode with my father to Cockermouth and by chance we saw Uncle Eldon at his park gate . . . lean and black, I remembered him : in a black hat whose long spout overhung his pale and handsome face like a crow's beak, and a black ribbed-silk coat with silver buttons ; even the vest was black. His only finery was the French lace of his cravat, as gray and delicate as frost on a spider-web : and a cane plated with tortoise. He was my father's elder by some years (his age then forty-one or two, I suppose) and could have had Yottenfews ; but at sixteen he left there of his own accord and went off to learn iron. Later, when my grandfather died, the brothers entered a pact : my father taking the estate, Eldon a sum to be paid piecemeal ; in which pact, my father once told me very cheerfully, Eldon swindled him, and had ever since borne us a grudge. Before long, using this money and his own brains, he had made Bigrigg ironworks the chiefest in the north-country ; and now owned half Cleator.

Well on that day four years ago my uncle had asked us in, rather grudgingly ; but in manners we could not refuse. He was then lately a widower. His daughter was with him at the gate : a longlegged sharp-featured child of my own age, though she seemed older, and when I ventured some shy jest she treated me like a bairn ; so I put out my tongue at her, behind our elders' backs as they conversed very civilly about nothing. But she was too genteel to put hers out, only looked at me with a chill disdain, so that I felt belittled. And I remember, leaving them, we rode by Cleator near where my uncle's iron-mines lay ; and saw miners clustering to work, their clothes and skins as red as an American savage's and the whites of their eyes baleful. Yet far more numerous than those were the idle

ones, for whom no work could be found. And my father said : " Nicky, when thou art grown wilt thou herd men or herd sheep ? " But I was too scared to answer with them in earshot, so starved and wolfish they seemed.

It was then he first talked to me about iron : how in old times, the thirteenth century I think he said, the monks worked iron and bred sheep among the fells, side by side ; and how the sheep and iron still thrived, when King Harry chased the monks for their Popery ; and how Queen Bess brought in a colony of Dutchmen to Keswick, promising them great gain. " But she bilked them " said he ; " for the old monks had stripped the forests nearly bare, from Blencathra to Furness ; and when the Dutch had coaled what was left of 'em, their foundries starved and they went. But the sheep-men spread through the wildernesses where forest had once been ; and the sheep prospered——" Meanwhile, about a hundred years ago said my father, the iron-men left their forges to rot inland, and crossed our fells and rushed violently towards the sea, like the Gadarene swine their progenitors ; for there was iron here, richer than in any place, and woods for smelting it still uncut. " But they stripped those in turn ; and now they're beginning to starve here in turn . . . and at Yottenfews we breed sheep ! "

I said, my uncle seemed to run no danger of starving, so fine his house was : and stone balls on the gate (I was thirteen that year, and paid more heed to the stone balls than to my uncle himself, I dare say). And my father answered :

" Thy uncle is the sharpest brain in all Cumberland ; he drives stone-bargains. And mark you, when a trade starves four workers out of five through idleness, it can hire the fifth cheap ! But if I were thy uncle, I'd be afraid for fifty pound to show my nose in Whitehaven after dark——" Whereat I wondered ; for I had not thought there was anything of which my father could be afraid. Yet I observed how barren this country was, no tree of any girth left, but all made long ago into charcoal : and at sea beneath us, coasting-ships that brought charcoal to Whitehaven (said my father) and took away sea-coal from the pits, and ore which most iron-masters could no longer smelt for themselves, since fuel had grown so dear. And at Cleator, when we returned next afternoon, the workless men stood sullen by the roadside and cursed us in broad daylight ; till I was glad to ride through Egremont again, past my uncle's park-gates, and to see our own oakwoods stretching up from

Yottenfews three miles off. And I mind saying : " Here's trees in plenty, sir ? " And my father's sharp answer : " Aye, but God forbid they should ever be scatted up to please *him*—— ! "

So to-day, nearing home without my father, I could see the oaks he had loved, gray-brown and shadowy as a squirrel's tail from our chimneys to Calderbrig.

Our house stood downstream from the village. Between, we farmed a hundred acres of riverland : mostly oats, barley or hay. But our sheepwalks lay inland of the village again, on the great triangle of Kinniside whose west flank overlooked the iron-country, and whose north boulder was the long ridge curving from Heckbarley to Caw Fell ; beyond which, outside our pastures, were mountains with snow on them, shielding us from north and east winds. To-day I stared and wondered what was happening behind them, on Shap road five-and-thirty miles away ; but sometimes I glanced across my shoulder to Egremont, hoping the need might not arise to seek help from there.

Near Sea Cow Field I took to the beach again, and forded Calder where he spreads, and rode upstream meeting nobody. For this tail-end of our estate, its seaward outlet I mean, was waste ground, a wilderness of river-stones which floods had brought down : with patches of gorse, and brambles, and pools with watercress : and some dwarf coppices of thorn, not ten foot high, shaved smooth by gales and bowed inland : and glades of adder-haunted grass, where in March a flame of daffodils would spring up : and Calder always within earshot, spreading, and sometimes burrowing himself fresh channels in the red and gray and blue stones. Near the beach lay a little mere, a skating-place in sharp weather, with a tumbledown barn close by ; but at what date this barn went up, or why, not even my father knew, unless it had been for salting. At the top end, behind a bluff which sheltered it from sea-gales, Yottenfews House stood.

It was built—our " new house," as we still called it—to replace one much older, upstream opposite the hamlet of Yottenfews, which Scots raiders had demolished ; for we'd lived on Calderside long ere that. If I could paint it you . . . massive, gray-roughcast, roofed with inch-thick sandstone slabs and surmounted by round chimneys. Its two wings joined in an L : with a porch in their angle, whitewashed, and shaded by a sycamore where horses were often tethered. Inside this porch

was a stone lintel bearing the date 1607 and the name Benedict Fleming : and a nailed oak door, opening on the living-room which ran the length of the wing. A broad stone turret rose from this end of the living-room, to a floor whose passages had odd steps (for the house was not all built at one time) and above it a loft, where fragrant apples lay in a twilight of huge rafters. Downstairs, the living-room had mullioned windows set in deep bays : and at its far end, opposite the turret stair, a peat-fire on cobbles ; for my father would burn no pit-coal here, but had his turbary up Kinniside where the peat-sods were cut. The hearth was bridged by a long rannel-beam of Calder oak, with an oak settle one side, and an elbow-chair at the other, and a pot hanging from the rannel-crook, and fowlingpieces above. On the wall facing seaward, between window-bays, hung an old wag-at-t'wall clock tuck-tocking. You could hear Calder outside, a stone's throw away : and bees in summer. And on bright days, the shadow of our sycamore latticed the flagged floor.

I drew near, comforted to be home again ; but at the gap between the rhododendron-trees, where beehives are and the porch first comes into view, I reined up. A mare was tied to our tree. When I went in, I found a gentleman in black waiting.

"Nicholas?" says he, none too sure : and then "You remember me?"

I remembered his voice, at least. It was my uncle, Mr. Eldon Fleming of Egremont, whom I'd not seen these four years.

VI

I WAS so much surprised, I stood and gaped at him very boorishly. He was short by our standards, lacking something of my father's six foot, yet seeming taller than he was for his lean straightness : with a hawk-face, as they show lawyers on the stage (but I find lawyers oftener put on easy flesh, like Pharaoh's rich cattle) and eyes not blue and bright-alive like my father's but a cold gray. Handsome he was certainly—more than my father I suppose, yet not near so good to look at : elegant in his black silk and lace and silver buttons : and his hands long and white and fine, the most beautiful I ever saw, in man or woman I think.

"Why sir" said I when I had mastered some of my confusion, "you are very welcome ! They have made you welcome,

"I hope?" For at this time our people were afield, and I was shamed to discover him unattended. He said urbanely :

"I came unlooked-for, but a few minutes since. I am very content to find *you*."

"You bring some news?" I blurted out, my manners forsaking me; for I was scared at this surprise, lest he had come to break it to me that my father was taken. But he nodded and smiled.

"The news are good or ill as you look at them" said he, watching my face. "Last night the rebels fought a rearguard fight against the Duke's dragoons, outside Penrith—a mere skirmish, I'm told: no great loss either side, and no issue. They saved their guns, and slipped through Penrith on the heels of the rest, our lads not following. If the Duke stayed for daylight before chasing them, they should be in Carlisle by now."

"And my father?"

"No word, no word at all."

"Oh, thank God for that at least!" I exclaimed.

"I hope we may, boy" says he: and paused, still watching me pretty sharply. Then he began to tell me how he had the news so soon, and some details. All yesterday, it seemed, Charles Edward with his main force lay in Penrith waiting for the artillery to come up, and towards dusk it came: very slow, the great wheels suck-sucking, the mire dripping from them, and all so clarty that the very guns themselves had no shape. Then about four o'clock (the courier still biding, looking for the Duke to appear) muskets began on Clifton Moor and continued above three hours. And then at nine or soon afterwards came a great rabble of highlanders, a thousand the courier judged, mired to their necks, some bloody, and so dead-weary that he could have found it in his heart to pity them, ruffians as they were: yet all in marvellous good spirits, with bag-pipers, since they had beat the Duke off: for still no Duke to be seen. So then this courier set out, being ordered for Cockermouth, and came there before dawn; and a fresh post, my uncle's private man, was in Egremont about breakfast.

"Whereat" says my uncle in his level voice that seemed to have no life in it, whatever tidings it told "I rode down into Saint Bees to inquire for you, and heard you'd gone home: and so here."

I began thanking him for the pains he had given himself, and asked would he drink some wine. But he went on not

heeding me : " Nicholas, last night's work promises to make an end to this folly ; for they say Carlisle can't be held. What your father now contemplates, I know not—nor you, perhaps ? "

I said, my father rode away across the hills without argument, asking no man's advice. Uncle Eldon nodded.

" He may return as abruptly ; or may follow his prince. What concerns you, in either case—what brings me here with all the haste I could make—is the price payable for his venture."

I cried : " O sir, don't think I've not pondered it ! We shall have to get him abroad."

" Tut, that's easy—and cheap ; a man of his parts will not starve, in whatever country. But here, Nicholas ? Yottenfews ? His land and interests—yours now, I rather say, since here he can know no safety ? It may cost dear, in money and contrivance, to save Yottenfews when the King's reckoning is made. Have you pondered that ? "

" Indeed sir, I've looked no farther than his safety, as yet. But your goodwill . . . I'm very sensible of your kindness in seeking me out."

" You mean, despite our estrangement " said my uncle—not harsh, but in the same crisp level voice without feeling ; as though he'd planned just what he must speak to me, and would speak no less and no more. " Your father and I have been content to travel different roads, long before this business ; he despises my iron, just as heartily as I——" but he was too courteous to say it—" as I am unmoved by his sheep. But there've been Flemings at Yottenfews, almost since iron and sheep were neighbours ; and Yottenfews must be saved." He looked straightly at me. " I've power, Nicholas : much power, I might have flattered myself till a month ago. But your father's action shakes all of us ; nor can I tell, in the sharp aftermath which I anticipate from this business, how far I may dare stir myself—or be let stir myself—to retrieve a rebel's estate. Meanwhile there's money to be raised : for without that, as the game goes nowadays up at Westminster, the most powerful cannot thrive."

I answered, as I had answered Mr. Paradise, that I supposed we could sell stock. But he disagreed, flatly.

" Sell stock and starve . . . I'm no farmer, Nicholas (indeed I count upon your farming Yottenfews henceforth) but that's not the way. If you sell stock, you save a property that will no longer be worth saving." He paused, waiting on me to

speaking ; but I was vexed what to answer, through shyness and through a sort of fear of him, so trim and grand he looked in his black silk and fine soft-leather ridingboots and rich lace : and such a stranger at Yottenfews, though he was my own kin. But he stood patient, watching me, his long white hands very still. At last I said timidly : " A mortgage on Yottenfews—if you would consider it ? "

But he'd have none of that either. " Mortgage is villainy, between kinsfolk " says he. " I'd have you count me as a friend : not as the wicked uncle of a storybook, come here to filch your inheritance——" and he laughed, for the first time since we had met : but whether in sympathy or in contempt of my inexperience, I could not guess. " Well " says he, reaching for his hat, " we must take counsel, severally or together, pending more news. It may prove, your father has enough put by to purchase your clean exemption : though I doubt that. Were I rich, I myself would purchase it and you could repay me at leisure. But my iron—mark you, Nicholas, this is confidence—iron's in a bad way ; and our great ones, who live by bribery and court-jobbery, demand cash. Be sure though, I'll stead you all I can ; and pray make free of my house, for we have been too long strangers ! "

So we went out, my uncle again refusing wine (which I found he never touched) and I walked at his bridle through our woods to Calderbrig, setting him on his way : saying nothing, my uncle very stiff and straight on his black mare, glancing about him sharply : and my own thoughts busy with him. I mused, how near the mark old Mr. Paradise shot when he'd said money was requisite, and bade me enlist my uncle. He'd spoke slightly of my uncle ; and my own father never mentioned him, or if ever, with blunt contempt. Yet to-day I found Eldon kind enough, and his refusal to consider a mortgage weighed much with me ; for indeed I'd known many an old heritage lost by mortgaging, in romances which I had read—I thought better of him, for that. I inclined to blame myself that I felt no affection for him stir in me, though I was grateful ; yet sensed already, that at any time he would be a hard man to love . . . At the road-gate he reined his mare.

" These oakwoods, Nicholas ? " says he. " There's a thought crossed me—I'm hard-pressed for fuel, with the ship-rates I have to pay. If you sold these, 'twould serve us both ; and oak's but weed, to you farmers ? "

I said my father thought otherwise.

"But your father" says he a little testily "may not come here to be asked. If it falls on you to save Yottenfews, I think you had rather sacrifice some useless acres of wood, than see all forfeited?"

"Yes indeed" said I; "but we've not reached that yet."

He shook his head. "Don't deceive yourself. When the King's judges make their reckoning, they'll give short shrift: and too late then to resist them. It is now, now by tortuous means and with hard cash in hand, that we must deliver ourselves. Believe me, Nicholas, you are too young to know the ins and outs of such vile traffic: as I do." I had no answer for that. And he went on still more urgently: "I offer you market-price; heaven knows that's high enough these days! Will you sell to me?"

So I said—miserably enough, and more to stave him off than to close with him: because my conscience charged me with ingratitude for his help, and he knew better than I—I said: "Be sure, sir, if the need presses they are yours at any time; but your plan takes me unawares——"

"Myself too" says he, smiling with his thin lips; but his eyes never smiled. "I had not thought of it till this instant—but no matter, I'm content to find you so wise. I shall hope to see you at Egremont."

And without more ado, while I stood dumb beneath the oaks which he coveted, he rode off.

VII

I TURNED homeward, full of care: not so much for the woods—it would be grievous if they had to go, but I hoped maybe I'd save them—as for provision of some refuge to hide my father till I might smuggle him overseas. Until this hour I had not grasped that he could come back as a fugitive only, with a price on his head; and that took some grasping. I had grown up accustomed to him as a king, here at Yottenfews: his rule unquestioned, though kindly: his love coequal with his authority like some wise despot's of old. But now, otherwise . . . To our own folk indeed he would remain John Fleming of Yottenfews, whatever the law might say; no blood-money could buy

them. Yet I saw clearly, he must lie somewhere less accessible than here to be safe from arrest. Thornholm, maybe?

At Thornholm, where Worm Gill and Calder meet beneath great fells, lived Will Rothery. He was my father's bailiff, *fac-totum* or what you like : being in charge both of the shepherds on our pasture above, and the farm-hinds of low Calder : as loyal a servant as ever drew breath, though blunt-spoken. Just now he was oftener at Yottenfews, having the ordering of all affairs in my father's and my absence ; for my mother died at my birth. And I was minded to seek his advice, when I saw him walk towards me up the riverside with Rake our house-dog.

"What, we're shut of our Uncle Eldon, then?" he greeted me ; and without waiting my reply : "Rake's tak'n a fancy to them fine silk coat-tails o' his . . . nay, no harm done. But he slips in without so much as a by-your-leave, and warms his bottom at t' fire ; and then I reckon Rake found him!"

"D'you mean, Rake——"

"Nay, the dog nobbut stood and bayed—but he gev your uncle a fright. I run in, sek a how-do they made of it! 'Me man,' says he when I'd shut Rake outside t' door, 'I'm Mr. Eldon Fleming of Egremont' he says—but I kenn't well enough who he was. 'I desire to speak with my nephew.' 'What, he's at school' says I, 'ye mun come week-ends, for him!' 'You are mistaken' says he very stiff and grand ; 'I will wait here.' And I thought : Wait then, it's thy own time thou'll waste—but by gox he was right an' all! . . . So he's tak'n hissel' off?"

"Aye, back to Egremont——" I knew Will was racked with curiosity to learn what brought Eldon Fleming here ; for if aught rose that seemed to touch my father's welfare in any way, Will judged it his business ; but I knew too, his pride would never let him ask me outright. And sure enough his next approach was circuitous ; for his eyes twinkled at me, and he said as in jest : "Maybe he's come to ax if *thou* knew aught of t' smugglin', last night!"

That startled me. It was not five hours since I'd left the bear-hole, and the cargo that lay there. "Smuggling——?" I cried.

"Hoo, thou's not heard? A fine hey-bey they've had, down at Ravenglass——" And out came the story. A great posse of excisemen—nigh every man of their whole muster, Will thought—had come at dusk into Ravenglass and stopped there all

night, on sure information ; but it seemed their information was wrong. " No cargo run, nor ivver like to be run ! What, they've give over smugglin' intil Ravenglass since thy uncle was made J.P., they reckon he knows too much ! " And about daylight, when the excisemen perceived they had drawn blank, they wreaked their spite by turning out half Ravenglass into the street in its skin, while they searched empty cellars. " And it's thy uncle " Will said, grimly now, " keeps these damned gaugers hotted-up, and forewarns 'em where to go. He mak's that no secret ! Las' night he was wrong ; but it's not often Mr. Eldon Fleming of Egremont's wrong—as some chaps kens to their cost ! " Will shook his head. " Six likely lads he's sent up, this twelve-month past : one hang't, and five transportit ! "

I shrugged. " I suppose magistrates must do their job——"

" Aye, must they ! But their job's hearin' charges and committin' folk to Assize : not payin' spies to trap them—that's t' excisemen's trade ; and thou knows, Eldon Fleming would be better liked if he kept his nose out on't ! But his spies failed las' night, howivver——" And then with a great clap of laughter he broke forth : " Eh dear, the Maister'd have enjoy't this tale if he'd been home ! He thinks nowt of thy uncle——"

And I laughed too, for all my cares, to reflect how my uncle had sent half the excisemen of Cumberland into Ravenglass, while the Fleswick cargo was run. Suddenly, Will checked himself. " Cockswunters, Mr. Nick ! " he swore, " I was forgettin' ! There's a post from thy father——"

" O Will ! When ? " I cried.

" Two hour back, while thy uncle was here. I'd have come in to ye, but I thought nay, let be till *he's* gone off, it's no business of his'n ! "

" Who brought it ? " I gasped out as we ran towards the house.

" Ned Tyson. It was him fetched the smuggler-news—gather't it on t' road. Night before last, the Maister packed him off—from Shap they call it, he says. He was all yesterday winnin' through Borrerd'le and over Sty Head, and the mare lame't hersel' ; he's had a job to get home ! "

He found me the letter. " He's in good fettle ? " says he, watching my face.

" Aye, he's all right so far——"

" Thank God for that an' all ! " he muttered, and slipped out. I read the letter again :

On Shap Fell,
Tuesday the 17th.

DEAR LAD,

I send this by Ned Tyson. And I wd. to God I could send Huthwaite too, but he won't part for the world. For we're bet, Nicky—chaff before the wind. We know, if the Pr. does not. Our best hope now, if we may hold the Duke off till our guns can be got away, is to shut ourselves into Carlisle. But the Castle's a hen-coop, & there we can make no long stay. This has been a brave venture, lad; but lord, how misconceiv'd & mismanag'd; only the valour of these highlanders in their lost cause mt. make the stoniest heart weep.

Well tho', I have set my hand to the plow & God knows I don't grumble, if I cd. find but some excuse to rid me of Geo. Huthwaite & so save his honest neck out of this. For thyself, know that I come no more to Yottenfews, good or ill; to Scotland, if I am spared, & thence into France. For my face at Y'fews wd. ruin all of us. Me absent, they will not threat thee there, I think. If they do, why, let no allegiance to myself cloud thy loyalty; thou hadst no part in this my escapade; & at Y'fews, if thou art prudent, Flemings may still bide. I misdoubt Eldon will not stir a hand for thee: yet mt. help shrewdly, if he wd. (make thy peace with that fellow, Nick, he's no fool, if a scoundrel.) I suppose I shd. ask thy pardon for these cares I have thrust on thee, ay & I do; yet hope, thy heart if not thy head will think indulgently of all who chase after jack-o'-lantern dreams of theirs—as this wreckt venture was mine.

There is haste here. God keep thee.

JN. FLEMING.

I read it, five or six times.

Maybe to one who did not know my father—his quiet-rooted pride, his infinite gaiety, his joy in everything he did and in all creatures round him—its message were simple enough: a beaten gambler's, no more. But to me who could read between its lines it told of a disenchantment most absolute, a rare spirit bruised and pounded: that my father who never failed of his sly jest however badly things went (and we'd known hard seasons at Yottenfews) could pen so stark a letter as this was: the saddest ever I read.

I went presently to seek out Ned Tyson and question him;

for I must know each detail—how my father had looked, and in what health he'd been, and whether wounded. But the lad lay there senseless almost with the hardship he had come through, and I lacked heart to rouse him. I sent for Rothery, meaning to broach my plan of sheltering the Master at Thornholm if we might post him word to come back. But Will was gone ; there was hay to be carried up to Thornholm this week, to feed our ewes if the cold weather turned to snow as seemed likely. And for me, work enough near home after my absence, with young Ned and Huthwaite away. At dusk I sat down to figure out what stock to sell ; for some part I reckoned we might spare, without crippling us. A ewe fetched seven shillings at that time, and a lamb four ; but for all I could see, such cutting-down as I dared risk would not bring in very much. There was more wealth in cattle—five pound, a good bullock might bring—but we kept no great stock of them at Yottenfews, where our whole strength was sheep. Yet money I must have, to send my father if he held to his resolve to keep clear of us : and far more, no doubt, to buy exemption for the estate itself if my uncle's bodings proved true.

So I sat there by candlelight, working sums : as I had sat a thousand times, with Rake's muzzle on my feet and the wag-at-t'wall clock tuck-tocking ; and from outdoors the whisper of the tide by Caldermouth, the river lapping his stones, and the wind fingering at the sashes—all unchanged, save that I was alone : and Rake's ears restless : and a gap on the rack above the fowlingpieces, where my father's sword used to be.

VIII

A NIGHT'S REST brings counsel, more especially to such folk as make no boast of quick wits. Next morning it came to me that before selling stock, or going further with my uncle in the matter of felling timber, I might find how my father stood with his banker at Egremont, and what we had in reserve. You'll wonder I had not thought of this before ; and indeed I asked myself the same question. But such things were not my province ; for though I was used to doing a man's work in my holidays, the accounts were my father's care. We might have plenty—we were prosperous at Yottenfews—or we might equally have nothing at all, since my father took pride in the maintenance of

his farm-buildings and gear, in the purchase of books (which he read widely and curiously) and in being debtor to none.

It was a bonny morning, still and intensely cold, the oak tops sharp-latticed against an empty sky as I rode towards Calderbrig: the hollies black under them, save where bairns had torn out a branch or two against Christmas and the white scars showed clear: a smell of wood-smoke as I approached the bridge, and a few blackbirds chattering. But at the bend of Calder where a little clearing is, I encountered a strange sight. A knot of six or eight men stood with their backs to me—strangers, ironworkers by their red clothes—and a pack-pony hung with coils of rope and two crosscut saws and some axes. And against these, as though they had followed from the bridge, a dozen of our folk, grim. A stone was flung as I rode up; one of the miners clapped his hand against his cheek, and brought it away bloody. The next stone struck one of the great saws and set it singing so that the pony reared up; a miner snatched at him; but the fellow who had been hit plucked an axe from the pannier and leaped forward brandishing it; I thrust in, shouting at them from Brigadier. In a moment both lots were round me; and across our folk's heads I had a glimpse of Will Rothery, running clumsily through the trees. "What's this trouble?" I cried.

They began clamouring all at once, our people pressing me at my right stirrup, the miners at my left. To these I turned first, having no fancy to present my back to them at such range. "Come!" said I. "Let's hear one at once! Who's your overman?"

A big fellow pushed through. "We've come by orders!" he said.

"Whose orders?"

"Mr. Fleming's, then!"

"I'm Mr. Fleming" I told him. "And you're on my land: and the first I've heard of it. What's your business?"

"By jing!" said a voice somewhere at the back of them. "Yon's the ribble's brat!"

Then I heard Rothery at my cob's head; and fair glad I was of him. "They're your uncle's chaps, Mr. Nicky: come to fell t' trees, they say. They mak' out, you order't it——"

"He did an' all" put in the spokesman of the miners. "Mr. Fleming tell't us—Mr. Eldon Fleming, last night!"

"He told you wrong, then" said I. "I've given no orders

to fell here : nor likely to. So you'd best take your chaps off." They drew back, muttering among themselves and scowling at our folk ; but I saw they'd no stomach for a fight with the odds so against them. I dismounted, and stepped to their leader. "My friend" said I, "there's been some mistake, I think : not of our making. If it costs you a day's work, I'll see that set right ; but you'll be healthier in your own spot."

"And say we choose to bide ?" he growled back at me.

I lost patience. "Bide and welcome, then. If you want trouble, here's plenty." But he jerked out an order to the rest and they began packing their gear. I walked over to Will. "They're off. Tell our chaps, no fratching ; stop quiet and let them pass."

So in a few minutes they trudged roadwards, not looking back at us, ruddy among the gray trees. "And what the dangment——?" Will muttered.

I told him my uncle had mistook something I said, but I was riding to Egremont : and without my plain order not a hazel-switch was to be lopped. "Nay, by gox, *we*'ll watch that !" he swore. I let them get well ahead of me ; for it seemed brutish, somehow, to ride close on them like driven cattle when they were doing only what they'd been bid. On the road presently, when my cob overtook their march, I saw the fellow whom the stone had cut and leaned down to him.

"This job's no fault of yours nor mine, lad" I said to him, "but I'm sorry you were hurt——" and gave him a shilling. He took it surlily, without thanks. As I rode on I heard a clap of sullen laughter come after me. "Ribble-pup——!" someone bawled. But our folk were out of sight, who would have started all the trouble afresh at such mockery ; and hard words break no bones.

I was angrier at myself ; if I had given my uncle a plain answer . . . but the more need now to visit him. Yet first to the banker's ; I could treat better with my uncle when I knew how we stood there.

Our account rested with one Pardshaw, father of little Pardshaw at Saint Bees who held my coat at the fight : a Quaker, a rare honest fellow my father vowed, though I knew little either of his sect or of him. I found the counting house not yet open ; so I passed through a wicket to his garden, very trim even at this dead time of year, with Christmas-roses in

bloom and snowdrops beginning to push up their green spears under his elm trees ; and when I knocked on the side door, a maid in dove-gray opened it with a little feather-mop in her hand. I asked if the Master were at leisure. " I will tell Jethro Pardshaw thou art here " says she, and showed me into the parlour. Soon he entered, alone : a sturdy rosy-faced old gentleman in snuff broadcloth. " Well, friend ? I know thy face, but no name to it ! "

So I told him that and my business : my father absent, we might need cash at Yottenfews ; but I knew not what funds we had.

" For him ? " says he. " Or for Yottenfews ? "

I was in doubt how far I ought to confide in him. He saw that, and smiled. " Thy father and I are old neighbours ; I should have asked thee first how he did. These Penrith news —— " And then he laid a hand on my shoulder. " Thou art troubled, Nicholas Fleming ? Speak it : and fear not, it shall not go past me. " So I said how my father had no choice but to follow the Chevalier—maybe to exile, since there now seemed little hope of success : and how it fell on me both to furnish him, and to hold Yottenfews till times mended. I came to ask what funds there were, and how they could be withdrawn.

" I see " nodded the banker. Then very bluntly : " Friend Nicholas, I think money-dealings are strange to thee ? I have no power to blab his credit, nor to pay out one jot of it, even to his own son. Yet I'll break faith thus far : if he lacks, there's enough to buy his passage abroad—but on his demand, only. Thou'st no letter from him ? "

" Not asking money " I confessed.

" Then I can do nothing—— " And though he spoke gently, there was that in his voice and steady eye which warned me no more could be said. But suddenly he was smiling. " So much for the banker ! Now let's put business by, and talk neighbourly. I infer, if John Fleming needed cash he'd have written to me through thee ; so thy mind may rest lighter. But at home—Yottenfews ? Thy trouble strikes deeper, friend ? " And so kind was his tone, my doubts died and I took heart to break to him my perplexity : how Eldon hinted of reprisals at Yottenfews, and the blood-money those might cost us.

" Us ? " says he. " Will *he* help ? "

" He'll buy our timber, if I'll sell. "

" Aye, will he—— ! " The old Quaker turned from me and

stood in the window, staring at his own trees. "That would help both sides, verily . . . and he offers no cure but that?"

I said, there'd been some rift between my father and him since as long as I could remember, so I'd no claim on him; yet when I offered to pledge Yottenfews he'd condemned mortgages between kinsfolk, and my esteem for him had gone up. The banker stared hard at me.

"Thou art simple, my boy. If the King's justice claims thy land, that land gives no security; if not, no loan is required——" And while I chewed this, mortified to learn my stupidity, Mr. Pardshaw continued: "Hark thee, friend Nicholas. I'd rather lend from mine own purse than see good timber come down; and peradventure I will. Only blab not that to thy uncle."

"But sir, I've no pledge but Yottenfews; and if that's worthless, and my father's credit not touchable——"

"Thy father's honesty" says he "is as much pledge as any man who ever dealt with him can require: even were we not neighbours. But I pray God . . . and verily I doubt this urgency, whatever thy uncle says. There'll be no reckoning till the rebels are bet; meanwhile, thou knows where to find me."

As we went forth the little dove-gray maid (his daughter as I supposed) was there feeding sparrows; and raised her brown eyes frankly and unashamedly, the custom of these folk. Mr. Pardshaw beckoned her. "Faith child" says he, "this is John Fleming's boy ridden over from Yottenfews——"

"Oh, with good tidings of him, I hope!" she cried.

I told her yes, I had his letter of three days back: no word since then.

"He's in all our thoughts, here——"

"He is in God's hand, like the rest of us" said the old banker quietly, opening the wicket gate. As I mounted, I saw Faith stand looking after me, her brown eyes compassionate and a sparrow perched on her wrist.

IX

I HAD NOT visited my Uncle Eldon's house since four years ago, the day of which I have told you. At that time, the Frenchman he engaged to plan his grounds was just finished; but the scars had now healed, the shaved lawns grown smooth and fine, the

nymphs put on some patternings of bird-dung and verdigris to temper their ugly bareness, and the clipped yews been schooled to so compact a symmetry that they were more like puddings than trees.

The house itself did not mellow. Four-square and arrogant, it seemed to pride itself on remaining as singular as when it went up. There was nothing like it then, in the red straggling little town between fells and sea : nothing like it now (my father used to thank God) for design, size or gentility. It had three rows of tall thin windows, with a white keystone to each : four tall flat columns up its face, supporting nothing so far as I could see but a balustrade on the roof, which served no purpose either : and a square porch on pillars, roofed like the inside of a shell and paved with black and white flagstones, where you stayed like a chessman on a chequerboard till you were bidden in or turned back.

The butler, when he learned my name, stared at me curiously. His master was out, he said, but he had orders that I was welcome at any time : which his manner did not suggest. (I wondered, following him into the hall, if the woodcutters had preceded me.) He would inquire whether Miss were disengaged, if I cared to wait ; and I had scarce time to begin admiring at the painted roof of the room into which he showed me—Polyphemus and the elusive Greeks—when my cousin herself appeared.

Her dress, that first morning, I could neither remember afterwards nor describe now if I did : some sort of riding-habit, I dare say, with a high throat of Brussels. But I know she seemed mighty fine and fashionable to my country eyes. She was just home—she'd been at Tunbridge Wells in Kent, at school and lodged with a relative, these four years ; for my uncle did not remarry. She had a style, an elegance of speech, and a serene possession of herself which widened the gap between us, though we were of an age ; and I've no doubt, her smart academy had learned her a deal of things that are not in a maid's schoolbook.

But what dumbed me was her loveliness. She was tall, very near my height, and as slim as a birch tree : gray eyes with something of her father's knack of weighing you while she talked : her face pale—no cloistered pallor but a lucent fairness of skin, like a kingfisher-egg that shows pure white as it lies in your hand, but when you study it, the faint and tender pink

flushes through. At our last meeting she had been gawky and hoydenish ; now her grace made me catch my breath as she came forward, one hand outstretched to me—she had Eldon's slim hands.

" Well, cousin ? " Then smiling, to discover me so abashed : " Last time you put out your tongue at me ; now you've mislaid that, even ? "

I stammered : " We were bairns then——"

" And now seventeen ! And myself mistress here, and quit of lessons at last—like you, though less suddenly ! " And I went hot and red, for I saw she had heard of my expulsion from school and was pleased to mock me for that. I could have said, to save my pride, that the charge of Yottenfews was a man's job ; but her loveliness had disarmed me. She knew it, too ; and went on with a disdainful little toss as though I weren't worth more rallying : " Father is at the mines ; he'll be back soon, we plan to ride into Whitehaven——"

" For news ? " I blurted ; for the hope and dread of news filled me hourly.

" La, no : for pleasure ! There's no news, but what is guessable in advance. The rebels are into Penrith and out of it ; they run fast—with good reason. I vow your father must be sharply disillusioned at his friends' prowess, by this ! "

I was silent ; her exultation, following on my father's letter, hurt worse than mockery of myself. By and by I demanded : " Why should you hate *him* so much ? He never harmed you."

" Hate him ? Foh, I know nothing of him ! I just admire that a man so established, with so little to gain from change, should place his affections so oddly."

" Well " said I, " we can't all be cut to one pattern. Timorous and prudent men are ten-a-penny these days ; but he was never that make——" I don't know if she thought I was glancing at my uncle ; but her eyes narrowed, and she flared up in his defence :

" It will need prudence to save your inheritance—more than *you* show, I think ! And even prudence will not serve, if you run counter to it and resist as oafishly as you do——" So I perceived she had been told of our brawl on Calderside. Before, she teased me with a sort of delicate grace ; now she was stone-hard. " For my part I'd not lift a finger in this, I lack the sensibility of my father : who thinks, because a thousand generations of Fleming sheep have browsed hereabouts, they

should browse for all time ! If you turn him away, and learn too late that your dreams and your father's dreams have beggared you, don't dream *I'll* plead your cause ! ” Just then Eldon's voice reached us. She gave me a sharp ironic little nod, as the door-handle turned ; and swung round, all smiles, to greet him. “ Here's cousin Nicholas come to make you a leg ! ” cried she. “ But remember, you ride with me—— ” And without so much as another glance my way, she went out.

He took my hand, very kindly. I had been wondering how to open the affair of the woods, and not seem ungracious ; but now he'd been told. So I said frankly : “ Sir, you'll have learned of this dispute. I'm here to say, it was not my design your folk were crossed ; I found both sides at blows—— ”

“ And then ? ” says he courteously.

“ To save a brawl, I forbade any felling for the present. But you mistook me altogether last night, if you thought I consented—— ”

“ Why then, I did ” says he, “ and supposed that the best way ! But since you don't, we'll find other ones—— ” He was so smooth and gracious, I saw he had been resolved how to answer me, whatever his own mind. “ You know of course, that if you do sell timber for charcoaling it should be down by February, or its value is much decreased. Still, time enough—— ” And then quite suddenly he demanded : “ You'd a post, yesterday ? ”

“ After you left, sir ” I said, wondering how he knew ; but in our parts, nothing is hid. And I told him (because it touched us both, and he must soon know in any case) that my father intended to keep clear of Yottenfews for a while.

“ So ? ” says he, staring at his hands. “ Well, he knows best. It may be easier to divert attention from Yottenfews, with him absent . . . which reminds me, I hear you are rusticated from the grammar school, being his son ? ”

“ Call it, kicked out ! ” said I curtly, for my cousin's taunt rankled still.

“ You did not mention it—nor I, yesterday ; it seemed no business of mine. But I've since changed that opinion. Last night I sent your Master a note, saying I took it pretty ill that a Fleming should be turned away for no wrongdoing. You've not preached sedition ? ”

“ Not I ! ” And I told him (what I supposed I must keep telling everybody, henceforward) that the Scots quarrel was nothing to me.

"You may think not" says he, grimly. "However, the man admits he spoke hastily: and will write you a letter, bidding you come back next term."

"Well, he may stick his letter——"

"You will not?"

"No, by God!"

My uncle frowned. "Don't swear, boy. 'Tis an ill habit . . . and I doubt you're unwise. Consider, while myself and you strain every nerve to prevent Yottenfews being pointed at, the word goes round that it's like father, like son, there: the father a rebel, the son expelled by a stern pedagogue for corrupting the loyal flock. Aye, that's being said already!"

"It's what he wants said!" I answered: and declared (not from Mr. Paradise, but as common talk) how my Head Master coveted the see of Carlisle when the Prince's nominee was unfrocked. My uncle stared, as though for once he heard something which surprised him.

"Indeed, indeed?" he said icily. "But perhaps such hopes can be dashed . . ." And in truth that old tyrant never did win his bishoprick, whether through Uncle Eldon's enmity or not I don't know; but remained with no more advancement, till a dropsy carried him off.

Our conference ended: what else passed at it, not worth memory. My cousin remained aloof. And I thought, riding back to Yottenfews, I might as well not have gone. No rebel-news: no counsel taken how to get my father abroad nor protect his interests at home (my plan for hiding him was not for magistrates' ears) no verdict about the trees: nor reproof for my breaking with the school, however impolitick he might think it. Negative, all . . .

For my uncle, I was still in doubt what to make of him: being raw, and puffed out with the conceit of managing Yottenfews, and slow to warn myself that more may lie below the surface of a man's address than is seen. "Make peace with him" my father wrote; "he's no fool, if a scoundrel." "A fox: keep in with him!" Paradise said. But I must needs trust my own judgment. That he had brains, I knew without the testimony of his wealth and position; that he was fox, I found no reason to suspect from his frankness to me; nor had he shown me that hard knock of bargaining to which his neighbours paid tribute, and which I'd been led to expect. He was pliant, where I had looked for him to be masterful: fell in with all I said, or at

most supplemented it from his skill in affairs, with a courtesy which disarmed me. And for my prime business, the safeguarding of Yottenfews—why, his own daughter criticised his sensibility in terms not short of contempt. . . . But indeed, as I rode home full of care, Barbara's image displaced him.

I had paid small heed to women. Once or twice I'd supposed myself in love, dallied with the theme, and postponed it to sharper interests ; but my cousin set me afire. I hated her—her disdain, her white cruelty, her indifference both to my father's ruin and to everything he held dear. But her loveliness dazzling me, and above all a sort of diamond-hardness in her (so sure of herself she was !) I adored as savagely as I hated, helpless in hate and love : and now condemned, through the tormenting days ahead, to abide their dual bitterness. Calf-love, you smile . . . and I don't doubt, it is as well that the grown man forgets the anguish his youth suffered. Or maybe he does not forget, but consoles himself with complacency ; for he suspects a magic in that early anguish of love, which he may not recapture.

So I rode home, changed, to Yottenfews : where nothing had ever changed.

X

AT CALDERBRIG I was told Rothery was at Thornholm, occupied with the hay. Our shepherds carry it into the high fells on ponies, when snow comes overnight, and spread it at sheltered places which the sheep know ; else the poor beasts go questing far afield for their sustenance, and get drifted, and have to be dug out. But the hay-crop is ricked in July, a busy season ; and it suits best to shift a load or two up to Thornholm after November, when the sauving is done. So I rode on by our drift-road which passes the ruined Abbey, till the woods end, and bracken and gorse begin again, and you see Thornholm on a little brow by the outfall of Worm beck.

Here Will's wife ruled, a sharp-tongued merry old body who had been my nurse once ; but just now she kept house for me at Yottenfews ; and I found nobody about the place but two lads who had fetched the hay, and were busy forking it into shelter. " Will at home ? " I asked them.

" He's about somewhere, Mr. Nick. Back o' t' house, likely——"

"I'll bide inside for him" I said; for I knew well enough what lawless business occupied his spare moments, in the gorse-patch above. My uncle might put down smuggling; but neither he nor anybody else could keep track of the little private whisky-stills in our own dales. By and by Will entered reeking of peat smoke. "What, I've a present for ye, Maister Nicky!" says he. "Summat to last ye over Christmas-tide, if t' nebbers drops in——" and he pulled down a great jar from behind the rannel, the kind our drinkers call a gray hen. "Thornholm milk—none better!"

I laughed. "That would last me a lifetime!"

"Aye, and maybe it should. But ye'll have friends in, askin' news o' *him*, and they munna go dry. . . . Well, what's latest?"

So I told him how Eldon had received me: and how the question of the oaks was shelved: and how he'd borne out what my father's letter advised, that it was best the Master should keep clear of Yottenfews for the present.

"And all that's just—nowt" said Will. "He's a grand hand at crackin' for an hour on end and sayin' nowt, is thy uncle!"

I said, we'd no reason to expect Mr. Eldon Fleming of Egremont to connive at hiding a fugitive; but for my part . . .

"Aye, *we* could mannish it" Will nodded, glancing about the place. He guessed my plan before I opened my mouth; or more likely, his own love had been pondering it. "But sithee, Mr. Nick, if t' Maister says he'll not come home, you nor me won't bend him! It's a gey pity——" he sighed. "He could lie here for ivver if he'd wanted; no stranger comes. Or if there did—what, there's none here that wouldn't have their tongues cut out sooner nor blab on him; we'd get word, and he'd slip off up Kinniside . . . nay, it's not *him* I'm flay't on!" And he fell silent; he'd a great trick of that—what Mr. Paradise used to call *aposeiopesis*, dinning the word into us. Old Will would shut his mouth when he deemed he had said enough; and your good-sense must fill the gap. I said, filling this one:

"There's danger to Yottenfews——" but I knew that was not the whole answer.

"Put it that way, if ye've a mind . . ."

When I was mounted, with the jar of Thornholm-milk in my saddlebag, he clapped a hand on my thigh. "I'd say thou's saved t' woods—over Christmas howivver."

"And if they must go" said I, to hearten him, "it's better

than selling stock. Less stock means less brass, all sides up : and maybe lads out of work. There's enough idle, down there Cleator way, without *us* turning men off ! And besides " I said, making the best of it, " if we clear Calder-bank we've more land—for crops if we choose to plough, or for the sheep in hard weather. I doubt we'd miss the woods at first, we've been used to them ; but in the end they'd likely be as well away. It's—it's a case of the most good for the greatest number ! "

" Aye " he said, wrinkling up his face at me. " And that's what t' dogs tell't fox . . . "

I turned off without answering ; I should draw no more from him in this mood. And I thought : Here's another friend of thine with no regard for thy uncle . . . My father, Paradise, Will Rothery : and against these my vanity made me instruct myself that I must judge the man as I found him. But how did I find him ? To me he had been patience and consideration itself, as I have tried to set down. Yet from the tangle of our intercourse one detail stood out sharp : a look he'd shot at me, and a steel-edge to his quiet voice, when he said of the Master of Saint Bees : "——but perhaps such hopes can be dashed ! " It made no odds that his threat lay not against myself but against one who had wronged me ; it scared me, to the bone . . . and from that moment (I now see, looking back) grew my peculiar fear of him as one whose malignity might be both resolute and unscrupulous : and who would indulge it, quietly, to the end.

Going down from Thornholm I had this and that to inspect : a ride to Gosforth, two miles away : a bite there with a neighbour, and some business suspended while my father was off, but now to be fixed between us. So it was dusk when I turned Brigadier to graze and slipped into the house. Sunset fades early these December days, and the room was twilit already. I sat down, booted, in my father's great chair, and my mind slid back to my cousin. . . . I heard steps come trudging up our shingle path, that leads to the seashore : a man's steps. But I thought : How if this were she, what would I say to her : or she to me—would she be still scornful ? Would she find anything to love at Yottenfews, or mock that too . . . Some one knocked.

Old Hannah—Will Rothery's Hannah, keeping the house for me—came waddling from her own place. She crossed the far end of the room without marking me, and I heard her open the door. A voice asked, was this Yottenfews ?

"Aye, they say it is—what's thy business?"

"Multifold!" says the voice: Mr. Paradise's, as I now knew to my surprise. "The *jus hospitii*: repose for aged limbs: a pot of ale, or two pots——" There was a pause, and then:

"Thou doesn't want much!" Hannah said—but chuckling, so that I knew the visitor had given her some droll gesture or look. "If it's young Mr. Nick, he's at Egremont."

"Rabbit him!" said the voice.

"Rabbit thysen! Thou can wait—in my kitchen, if thou's a friend o' his. Wipe thy clarty feet, now!"

"When comes he back?"

"Thou mun ax him that question, when he's here. While then, thou'll have to make do with me."

"Why, my nymph, so I will!" says he, rallying her; and I kept mum, for this was old Paradise in a new person. "In thy bonny face I spy goodwill to all mankind; and I tell thee I've come through fire and water—or through water at least, this place is more begirt with plaguy streams than the Cabbage-patch of Alcinous—through water for thy sweet sake!" And I heard him squelch his wet boots.

"Well, thou's come five-an'-twenty year too late" she informed him. "And if my man was by and heard sek talk, he'd clout thy old lug!"

He laughed. "Never fear, I'll be prudent! What, I'll creep up thy stairs one night, one of these spring nights when Venus rides the sky, and thy man's outdoors feeding the new small baby-sheep——" I peeped round, and saw him rock his arms as if he were coddling a baby: Hannah shaking her sides. Then I cried out—I had to, or burst myself:

"Hannah! Who's that old baggabone on our doorstep? Bid him be off!"

"Lard!" she squealed. "Mr. Nicky——?" But he pushed past, and Rake with him—he'd made friends with Rake on his way up from the shore: which was more than most could have done.

"What, me boy! Idling on the hearth! *Tityre tu recubans*—is this how farm-work goes forward?" I thrust him into my chair, while Hannah hung round us cackling: "I mun leave him thee, Mr. Nick! I doubt sore, he's no fit company for an honest wife!"

"You'll sup here, sir?" I begged him.

"Gallons!" said he.

Hannah was gone off, bustling to fetch food for us. I lit candles. He tossed his wig on the mantelpiece, and I helped him pull off his boots. "So this is Yottenfews?" says he, turning about him to examine everything, as one who knows he is welcome. "A fair heritage——" and he cocked his bald head at me. "Thy mushroom-face has lured me some weary leagues to-day; but it's worth all them, to find thee."

"You've ridden, sir——?"

"Tut, poor men don't ride; *solvitur ambulando*! Well, what news?"

I told it, while the old woman set supper. He ate, watching me. I brought out the Thornholm jar. He said, filling pipe and glass: "You're wise to stand well at Egremont: even if the trees go. Money is power. And wise, I think, to turn your back on us at the school, rather than leave this nest too much empty; for you recall what happened to the swept house in the parable—many devils rushed in! Though indeed one were enough . . ." But before I could ask him what he meant, he resumed very cheerfully: "I'm told there was a gathering of half the devils in Cumberland at Ravenglass beach, two nights back; and that like Peter and his crew they toiled all night and caught—nothing: there being nothing to catch."

I laughed. "You should know more of that than I! Yet there's one thing I can't fathom——"

"Only one? You are lucky."

"Two nights back, Fleswick being then your game, the gaugers were drawn to Ravenglass on a false scent laid by your spy——"

"Not mine" he shrugged. "I am but *vox*—or rather, *silentium*: a mere ghost in this business."

"But if their spy, who is also unknown to them the smuggler's spy, finds 'em a cold scent——"

"He'll lose face? Aye, that's our trouble; our monopoly thrives too well! On former nights, there was always some poor fishing-smack to play scapegoat. But rot me, such goats grow rare!"

He brought rebel-news: that the Prince was in Carlisle since dawn yesterday, his army as good as whole, for the affray at Clifton cost no more than a dozen dead on both sides; with him, Lord Murray who had so distinguished himself in that skirmish, and young Cappock the mock-bishop: "our Doctor's forerunner, keeping the see warm for him!" But report said

the Prince intended to pursue his retreat, and was leaving Carlisle this evening. "Good news, either way. If your father now breaks with 'em, he can lie at Thornholm as planned ; if not—they have fooled the Duke on his own ground, he'll never catch them on theirs. So be merry, Nick ! I've trudged far to bring these tidings, the best we've yet heard."

I besought him to stay the night. Since sunset rain had come, floods of it, gurgling at the eaves and lashing the black windows : and to-morrow Saturday——

"Aye, no school, praise heaven. *A dies non !* I'll stop very gladly."

So when our candles guttered, we snuffed them, and threw on peat and stretched our legs to the blaze. He spoke no more of my father ; indeed I think he tramped those seven miles with no aim but to ease my heart with his news, and divert me to other matters. Now I heard many a droll story of the running-trade and its shifts : yet none droller, to my mind, than the rueful complaint of Mr. Paradise that his "scapegoats" were so discouraged. "We've been too clever : fallen in the pit which ourselves digged ! Egad, we'll soon have to provide 'em at our own cost—run a small cargo and betray ourselves, now and then, just to keep the excisemen in good spirits . . ." So with his jests and puns and mock-solemnities he contrived to unseat my care—aye, I was happy and secure that evening, as I had not been since my father rode off.

At a late hour, nigh ten o'clock it may have been, Hannah came in to say good-night ; and Mr. Paradise must begin teasing her, she nothing loth. "I'm told" says he, "your good-man lives over the hills and far away, and you here earning your own keep as a wife should ; and you see no more of him than he chooses ?"

"Well" she says, "what's amiss wi' that ?"

"Naught, naught ! Such matches are made in heaven. Now were I wed, a calamity which I've eluded so far——"

"Some girl's missed nowt, then !" says Hannah.

Paradise pulled a long face. "There's but one woman I ever loved, till I met thee. She'd a sad end."

"If thou stopped single, I can't see she'd much to grummel about."

"She married a gauger : a most worthy honest fellow, as all excisemen are——"

"Shaff !" Hannah exclaimed.

"You may mock—yet perpend! This gauger's business kept him from home all week until Saturdays——" He sank his voice and I could foresee one of his romancing-tricks; but Hannah's interest was snared. "Till one night—one black wet Friday night, like this—he came home unheralded, and found his wife with a lover. And he pulled out three pistols, three great loaded horse-pistols which he used, you know, in his trade: and shot her, and then her lover, and then himself——"

"Lard save us!" cried the old gossip, quite deceived. "There's a fearsome story!"

"And yet" went on Mr. Paradise earnestly, "it might have been worse."

"Worse! What, it couldn't have!"

"Why yes, the fellow might have come home on the Thursday night" said Paradise, "and found *me*——"

The old woman gaped at him; then she turned purple-red; then she began to crow and whoop—and I too, not only at the tale but at the way he had tricked her. He joined in, with his great belly-laughter, baying like an old hound; and while we stamped and clutched our ribs, the dog Rake sprang up affrighted at the clamour we made, and began barking at us . . . and then his bark turned to a growl and his hide bristled. A cold air blew in on us. We spun round. The door stood wide, and a still figure in a dripping riding-cloak was there watching us, lantern in hand. "Why, Uncle Eldon!" I gasped out, getting my breath.

"You are merry" he said.

He set his lantern on the floor, where its light glittered on the raindrops runnelling from his black cloak and his hat-brim. It threw up queer shadows on his face as he stood there, so motionless, and lit his pale long hands.

I said: "Pray be welcome, sir. Here's an old friend of mine——"

"We are acquainted" said he sharply. "How d'ye do, Mr. Paradise . . . my errand, Nicholas, is to you."

"Yes, sir?" I whispered, while my heart sank.

He made no delay of it; but told me bluntly he had learned my father was dead.

PART TWO

Cleator

XI

WHEN THOSE pass whom we best love, there is an interim in which their presence is more real than when we had them. In life they were here or there : but in death, every place—at bed or board with us, or sitting against us in the inglenook, or on the turn of the stair . . . Late that night going to bed I saw my father's room lit up, and entering found Hannah. She had curtained his windows, stayed the pendulum of his clock, and was shrouding his dressing-glass with a coverlet.

“ Why, Hannah—— ! ” I wondered. It is our custom to cover mirrors, where one lies dead, against the ill-luck of seeing the corpse in them. She turned and stared at me sorrowfully. “ O Nicky, bairn ” says she, “ we’ve our dead with us in this place ! And that thou and I kens right well—— ”

And at daybreak when I went down she was before me, in the plot where our beehives stood, under the rhododendrons ; from skep to skep she hobbled : tapping each, stooping, whispering at their silent doors that the Master they served was dead . . .

Such small things I remember, of that heavy Christmas-tide. Our minds were numbed ; we spoke little ; only went doggedly about our accustomed tasks, or made work when these failed us. What seemed most strange was that in all our fears for him death had vexed us the least. His health, we had been anxious for : his comfort in that bleak weather : later, our hope of smuggling him abroad or of hiding him up at Thornholm : the money which he might need, and our means to forward it : but these news, scarcely at all. And indeed it seemed bitter hard, that a great army should march down into the heart of England and back, losing not fifty men from five thousand : but he had to be one.

Of my uncle we saw nothing. He rode home when he had spoken his message : sending word next day, by his man, that whenever I wanted him he would wait on me. Mr. Paradise

stayed ; the school kept holiday into January, and he vowed I should not be rid of him save by force : “ *Arcades ambo*, hey ? You shall learn me your mysteries ; in three days I’ll be worth any farmer’s keep ! ” He alone proffered me no sympathy, but kept me instructing him, asking me this and that about our farm work, telling tales and cracking his dry jokes as before ; and if that seem odd conduct for a house of mourning, let me say now—no boy had ever such a bulwark in his adversity as old Paradise proved to me. He and Will Rothery, in their divers ways, kept me employed and active when I might have sunk into a torpor of dull sorrow : the best friends ever I had.

He rode up to Thornholm with me that first morning, to tell Rothery what had come. But Will knew already. “ ’Tis certain, then ? ” was his greeting. And I said aye, my uncle’s story left us no room for hope. A strange story it was. At dawn after Clifton fight, the county trainband men were sent to succour any wounded who might lie in the hedge bottoms, and to strip and bury the dead. But of these they found barely a score—nine dragoons and as many highlanders—till word came that a pile of corpses had been thrown into Clifton Dam by the rebels, in order to hide their loss. So going there, soon after daylight in a tempest of wind and rain, they took these out, two-score they said, and all rebels : and among them an officer, in a green-braided coat not like the blue-and-red of the highlanders, with his name graven on his scabbard, “ Jn. Fleming of Yottenfews ” : and buried him with the rest.

“ And who tell’t Eldon ? ” asked Rothery.

I said, the militia-captain was his acquaintance : who being shown the sword and coat, had deemed my uncle should know. He therefore sent them at once, by a man wounded and discharged home to Cockermouth, who rode in very late the same evening ; and the next evening—yesterday, that was—the trooper being now in fever and not caring to entrust the coat and sword to a post, sent the captain’s letter only for my uncle to read. But of Huthwaite, my father’s shepherd who had ridden with him, it said nothing. Will Rothery shook his head.

“ Huthwaite went intil t’ mill-dam too ” he said sombrely, “ or he wouldn’t nivver have stood by and seen t’ Maister’s body so shamed : not George Huthwaite wouldn’t ! We’ll miss George lambin’, an’ all . . . ” Then, Mr. Paradise putting some question, Will began telling him how rare a fellow Huthwaite had been, and how cunning with sheep : old Paradise leading

him, so that we passed from Huthwaite to lambing-talk, and from thence to the fresh snow fallen overnight, and our need to carry hay up Kinniside—all this devised as I well knew to keep the talk from my father, about whom none of us dared to speak.

Will asked my help at the hay-bearing : being short (or so he made out) with poor George gone, and young Tyson abed with fever. So all that day we were on the fells, from Revelin to Boat How and from Caw Fell to Blakeley : ponies and Will and I. Mr. Paradise claimed to come with us ; but we told him the ups and downs of such a day were no job for him, with snow thick in every gill ; so he stopped, and had hot-pot stewed for us each time we came down to load, and refreshed our weariness with his jests.

This night I took him to sleep at Yottenfews, but promised I'd come back shortly : Will assuring me (the first I'd heard of it, but no matter) that for five years we'd lacked an extra lambing-pen up at Thornholm, and must build it without delay. There was no finer waller in our country than Rothery. He built the new pen himself, and for days kept me as thrang as any labourer lifting stones from the beck ; while Paradise plied between us, walking the laden pony up to where Will worked, and the empty one down. And I mind how it heartened me to watch the friendship between these two grow, despite their difference.

"He's a character !" Will told me. "Missus thinks t' world on him aw'riddy for his love to thee, Mr. Nick. And yon girt head o' his stuffed with learnin'——" My old master's learning would have counted nothing with Will, had he not shown himself a willing worker on top of it ; as it was, Will conceived a vast delight in propounding questions to Paradise, on subjects far beyond his unlettered range, but by no means beyond his interest. (What way the Romans brewed their ale, I mind, was a problem that never failed them.) And at rest-times, when the talk crackled to and fro, Will's native shrewdness often held its own against the other's more polished wit. Yet Will could scarce admire more at his omniscience, than did Paradise at Will's craft. "The renowned Balbus" he declared "won cheap fame as a wall-builder ; for the fellow used lime. But our friend Balbus Major, here, coaxes smooth river-stones to stand erect, in defiance of sense and of gravity. He is Apollo conjuring his shepherd-citadel : and I bald Neptune, his hind !"

"What of me?" I cried, stooping at my work in the beck.

"Thou art too ugly for Narcissus, too green for Deucalion," he mocked me. "Come, more stones! Balbus awaits..."

Thus we wrought, trampling down our grief: and finished on Christmas Eve.

We supped at Will's, and sat late with him. It was near twelve when Paradise and I rode down through silent Calderbrig, clattering on the iron ground: no wind, and the frost stilling everything but the ripple of Calder river: so calm we could hear them ringing in the blessed Morn, over at Beckermets: with a star or two tangled in the oak-tops, the moon not yet up, but on her way. Southward near Ravenglass—but rather felt than seen, like an old friend that does not need to obtrude himself—Black Combe hung sentinel: the Combe where (folk say) bees sing all night on Christmas Eve and the beasts kneel in adoration.

"And to-morrow?" says Paradise. "A rest-day? Or do we bucolicks not rest?"

I asked would he ride to Cockermouth; for I felt, Christmas Day without my father at Yottenfews was more than I cared to endure. "Cockermouth, or where you like!" he said.

So when we had broke our fast we set out; and this side Egremont whom should we meet but Pardshaw's little dove-gray maid, on her way to Meeting, I guessed. I'd have pulled off my hat and ridden by; for though we had spoken at Pardshaw's the other day, I could scarce presume her acquaintance. But when she gave us her quick smile, Paradise reined up (he had an infinite curiosity for women of all ages) so I must halt too. "A happy Christmas to you, Miss Pardshaw!"

"My name is Faith" says she; and I recalled, that in her sect they practised an equality which abjured titles.

"Well then, Faith!" I smiled, feeling it too much a familiarity. "But a happy Christmas however!"

"And to thee, friend!" she said: adding tenderly, "though we have heard thy news and grieve for them. Thou art welcome all times, Jethro Pardshaw says: and thy friends too——" she looked shyly at Paradise, as though she would not have me think myself singled out. When we rode on:

"Thou hast made a sweet conquest there" says old Paradise cocking an eye at me. "Gadslife, as bonny as those Beckermets nymphs for whom, they say, your Drigg gallants once pined—

but I suppose you're better-read than I in the bawdy legends of Cumberland. What's her name : Faith ? ”

“ Aye, Pardshaw's girl—I've barely met her.”

“ That's a fault she'll amend, in her own maidenly fashion—she's maid yet, or I'm no judge ? ” And he began, with zest, a disquisition on virginity which might have lasted to Cleator.

“ She can stop maid for me ” I said. His loose talk jarred me, as it had not done all this mourning time (for I'd known well, it was his love and care of me kept his tongue clacking). There was a sort of purity in Pardshaw's tender dove which put bawdiness to rebuke . . . yet I'd no further thought for her nor for Paradise neither, as we drew level with Uncle Eldon's gates and my whole soul went out wondering if I should catch a glimpse of my cousin. But we saw neither her nor him.

“ ——works himself like an Africk slave ! ” says Paradise : and I found him now talking of my uncle. “ And yet by all odds, iron's a hard mistress nowadays and is breaking weaker men's hearts. But he's iron himself, there's a what-d'ye-call't, an affinity—'steeth, it was no mere accident he turned his back on sheep thirty years ago, and took up with that harsh trade ! ”

Round Cleator the miners were out making holiday, workers and workless : and drunk already, most of them, though it had not yet gone noon. In a pit by the schoolhouse, cocks were fighting a main, a red crowd cheering them. One fellow knew me as we rode past, and began bawling rebel-brat till another bade him : “ Shut thy gob, t' lad's in trouble——” For my father's death had been bandied everywhere, even among those to whom he was only a name. I felt no less relief than four years ago, to shake off the iron-country and to follow the Cockermouth post-road.

XII

I WRITE of roads ; but if you knew even the best of them at that period, you'd admire the changes since wrought. Now folk ride everywhere in their carriages, even among the fells—and for pleasure too : not on horseback and under strict necessity, as we used. To Keswick especially, I am told, tourists come more each year—“ lakers,” our folk call them with sly humour, since “ to lake ” means to play—sketching Lowdore-force in their pencil books, and venturing up Newlands Hause and

Borrowdale to shudder genteelly at our hills : whence Keswick derives much profit. And strange it is to reflect, that this modern zest in roadmaking was begun with no thought of them, but because Prince Charles Edward in the winter of '45 marched unlet into Derbyshire : there being no way for the King's men to intercept him, nor even to come up with him short of Scotland when he turned back of his own accord.

Our road, then, to Cockermouth was fair enough for its day : a central causeway of cobblestones, all sizes from a man's fist to a man's head, gathered from neighbouring becks ; on each side gravel or clay, which farm-carts and now and then a gentleman's carriage had rutted. Mostly we rode on open grass along the edge of the road ; only in villages, or where the road was hemmed by walls, we must take to the cobbles. Not far from Cockermouth in such a narrowed place we saw a great mob ahead of us, going to some fair, we thought ; but when we came up with them, it was guns.

Six ugly-looking eighteen-pounders, there were, fire-new from the foundry. The haulers were resting as we came up ; their tugs had broken through the frosty crust and were mired to the axles ; it seemed like being all they could do to get them to Cockermouth before dusk. These were for Carlisle for the Duke, we were told, to breach the walls and to reduce the garrison which Charles Edward had left.

" Who made them ? " Paradise inquired.

" Why, Fleming of Egremont, who else ? This lot'll shift them lousy ribbles into kingdom-come, if ivver we get them there—but it's sore work ! Them's t' Bishop's horses " our informant added, pointing at a score of stallions who were yoked to the guns. " His lordship's lent 'em—maybe he reckon't it was time he gev King Geordie a hand, just to eddle his pay ! " At which a laugh went up ; for my lord bishop had fled very promptly from his country seat when the rebels first crossed the border. " By the same token, Eldon Fleming's sweaten some blood an' all, gettin' t' guns ready : *his* family havin' mucked their copy-book in this affair, ye might say . . . "

Soon after, we were in Cockermouth.

My errand was to seek out the wounded militiaman and recover my father's sword and coat which (so Eldon said) would be safe there till I could call. When we had dined and taken beds, we found him, sitting before his fire with his arm in a sling. I had no words, when those dear relics were handed over

to me ; but for manners' sake, Paradise begged to hear his tale of the fight ; and it was soon clear, this would lose naught in telling.

"Midday on t' eighteenth" says he, "we first sighted 'em, from top o' Thrimby Brow—t' rearguard, this was ; t' young Chevaleer had gitten his main force intil Penrith aw'riddy, we'd not durst meddle with *them*. And says captain : 'Noo lads, if we cut off this gun-train there's a mort o' glory awaitin' us' says he ; but he didn't sound over-confident. Howivver, we bang't drums on safe side of t' hill, hopin' they'd be too flay't to come up. Did I say flay't ? Gox on, they took t' brow at a gallop ! And a lean leapin' feller at their head in a green coat. 'Yon's Fleming o' Yottenfews !' says somebody . . . eh mister, thou'd have been right proud on him if thou'd seen !"

He paused ; and I perceived he was divided between grieving me and pursuing his story. Yet I would hear all. "So then you fought ?" said I.

"Nay, we kenn't better. If they weren't flay't on us, by jing we was flay't o' them a' right ! We nobbut slipped off intil t' wood and let them gan by."

"But there was fighting that night ?" said Paradise.

"Aye, two mile farther when t' Duke's sodgers catch't up ; but our chaps hadn't any call to meddle wi' that, neether——"

I looked at Paradise mutely ; a less heroic tale I could not conceive. "Yet you were hurt ?" put in Paradise. And the fellow grinned.

"Nay, that was nobbut a mistake one of our lads made with his musket—they're kittle handlin' when ye're not used wi' them. George was right sorry about it ; and says he : 'What, I'll bend down at thirty yard and thou mun tak' a scop at me backside an' then !' But I didn't howivver. George kenn't well, I might have shut all day and not hitten't ; and I was glad eneuf to start heām . . ."

And that was all he had to tell us, of the action which had cost my father his life.

We learned a deal more from an unsought informant, a dragoon-major who had since installed himself at the inn ; and yet I doubt he'd been no nearer any actual fight than our rustick. He was dressed very foppishly, with a curled wig and not a crease in his uniform ; and was served or accompanied (we knew not which) by a pinched-looking fellow in dark broad-

cloth who scarce opened his mouth. But the major was garrulous for the pair of them. He came post-haste from Carlisle where (he would have us understand) he served on the Duke's staff ; and assured us, he could impart not only to-day's news but to-morrow's into the bargain. When we put him some question about Clifton, he waved it aside.

"That brawl" says he "was but a prologue, a *praeludium*—I perceive you are gentlemen of parts, you'll allow me the word—a *praeludium* to our felicity. We've chased the Upstart from our doors, and shall soon destroy him at leisure. Meanwhile we're clinching our success. Reprisals, sir ! *Vae victis*, sir—if you chance to know what that means ? *Fiat exemplum*——"

"*Ruat castellum !*" Paradise capped him, so adroitly that he was taken aback. "The Castle has fallen, then ?"

"Not yet ; but it will. The Duke has bespoke guns, from one more honest than are some of his family—eh, Prescott ?"

The silent man nodded ; and presently, when the major's attention was engaged, this other withdrew the bottle from his elbow and slipped it beneath the table. But the major was not so drunk as to blab names, and began telling us what was being done in Carlisle, where his commander the Duke still lay. So far, he said, the Duke's men were pretty welcome ; for the retreating highlanders had proved less affable than aforetime, commandeering horses, and the very shoes off men's feet. But to-day the Duke had received a peevish complaint ; "From the clergy, would you believe it" exclaimed the major, "against our desiring their bells ! Why sir, God damn and burst them sir, bells are the perquisite of the artillery-train on all such warlike occasions !" As for reprisals, yesterday the Duke had made a start by hanging five in Carlisle field : not local men, but dragoons who deserted Sir John Cope at Prestonpans and had been recaptured since Derby. "Indeed, your locals seem to have had more sense than support the Upstart" he said. "Dacre of Lanercost, on whom he most relied, professed a fortunate fever ; none else of consequence stirred a hand—with one exception, eh, Prescott ?"

"With one exception" nodded the silent man ; and closed his mouth like a trap.

Our fellow-guests left while we were at breakfast, the major informing us that he must press on to Whitehaven : "where I take over a command——"

We followed later : and a good deal slower no doubt, for Paradise was unused to riding, and the outward journey had chafed him. Even so, he was not past joking against himself. "*Mens conscia recti*" he remarked "is a thing I've been very little troubled with, until now——" We parted in Egremont, he having business in Saint Bees though his holidays were not ended. I wondered if another smuggling-night were in view : but supposed not, from a hint he had dropped me. "No need" said he "for us who trade on the grand scale to risk our necks every week ; there's a moderation in all things !" I pressed on fast, glad to be home ; as I rode into Calderbrig, I saw that which made me double my speed—though I'd half expected it ; a scarlet coat and a black coat, turning down our lane.

One or two voices hailed me fearfully as I spurred through the village, but I paid them no heed. When next I sighted the pair, they were riding down Calderside and peering warily this way and that through the oak-trees ; and I now saw that a stone's throw ahead of them rode a dozen or more troopers. I followed unnoticed ; when they came to the house, the troopers divided to encompass it, while the major and his companion approached the porch. I made haste after them, but was challenged by their sergeant.

"I live here" I told him.

"Do ye ? Well, ye'll find visitors as wants a word with you—but hands off that sword, if you please !"

They had dismounted, as I rounded the house-end ; old Hannah held them in play. "O Mr. Nick—— !" she faltered as I flung myself off Brigadier. But before I could speak, to my extreme astonishment I heard my uncle's voice from the living-room, desiring Hannah to admit them ; and when I followed on their heels, there he was seated in my father's chair, grimlipped and calm, with his white fingers drooping over the arm-rests. "Well, gentlemen ?" said he ; and only his lips moved.

The major glanced quickly at his companion, who shook his head ; then he pulled out a document. "I hold a warrant for the Master of Yottenfews, and command you to render him, in the Duke's name——"

"In the *Duke's* name ? An odd form of warrant !" For a moment he stared at them : and past them at me, hovering unseen behind. Then he said coldly : "Well sir, read out your warrant. I am Master of Yottenfews."

XIII

THE SILENT MAN spoke at last. "Come, my friend, you will not persuade us you're John Fleming of Yottenfews; for I know better!"

"John Fleming was killed near Penrith, not long ago" said my uncle. But the major cut in:

"Oh aye, we heard that tale on the road. 'Slife, I don't believe it!"

"I am not answerable for your opinions, sir. If your warrant covers him alone, you come too late and I will wish you good-day; if you're empowered against the present Master of Yottenfews, you are addressing him."

"Who the devil——"

"Eldon Fleming, sir, at your service: John Fleming's brother and guardian to his son, being a minor—the boy stands behind you. Should you dispute these facts, or suspect me of fraudulently concealing my brother, you may arrest or otherwise proceed against me to the extent of your warrant: which you have not yet read, by the way."

At this the two strangers eyed each other again, somewhat dubiously; and the major, in a much less aggressive tone than he had used, asked leave for them to confer. "You have made this house yours" my uncle replied stiffly. "Do as you think fit." So they withdrew into a window, and held a colloquy in which their eyes shifted sometimes from my uncle to me, but always back to my uncle. I caught the word magistrate . . . By and by they returned.

"I conceive, sir" the major said, his truculence quite diminished, "you are that Mr. Eldon Fleming of Egremont who——"

"There is no other in this country, that I know of" shrugged my uncle.

"Who is contracted to send guns——"

"To the Duke, your commander. Very well, sir; what then?"

The major smiled, very uneasily. "'Sdeath sir, I hope you don't think we'd the least intent to hale *you* to Carlisle: the last thing I should do!" And my uncle bowed; he could put more contempt into a bow than most men into an oration.

"Why, yes. If you brought me, instead of those remaining guns I'm still busied with, I believe it would be the last thing you'd ever do—as a soldier at any rate. But that's for you to decide."

"Foh, 'tis decided!" says the major more and more confused, as indeed they both were. "If you'll give us your word that your unfortunate brother is dead——"

"I have, sir: and see no reason for repeating it" snapped my uncle.

"And should inquiry be made, you'll testify that we performed our commission here? My name, sir——"

But suddenly, with a swiftness that made me jump, my uncle was up; and I saw in his eyes that look of cold and unrelenting malignity which had scared me already. "O sir, I know you both too well——" He wheeled on the fellow in black. "Four years ago, Mr. Prescott, my brother's mercy in forbearing to prosecute saved you from jail: for which you hated him, and are come now like Judas to discover him to his enemies, if you could. Know though, I still hold evidence against you and will use it if I see fit." To the soldier he said: "You, Mr. Crackenthorp, make even this swindling notary to appear honest. For you are one of that militia *clique* who refused very cowardly to defend Carlisle, when the invader was at her door; but on second thoughts, your Colonel Durand having fortified the Castle in spite of you, you ate your words and sneaked after him rather than risk your neck in the city. And now, by heaven, when the tide turns and the Duke enters Carlisle, you impose yourself on his staff as an ex-officer of Durand's garrison (Durand by this time being cashiered and in no case to confute you) and extract this commission against Yottenfews, to patch your loyalty and evade service in Scotland! You forget, though, a document to which you put your name when you betrayed Durand: and which may trip you yet, if you pursue your rancour against men whose very treason was honester than the service of such as you!"

What debate they held, when they had removed themselves from our premises, I don't know; but it was short, for soon afterward from Hannah's window she and I watched the whole troop ride away through the trees. I returned to the living-room to find my uncle staring moodily in the fire. I stammered some words of thanks. He shrugged.

"Bluff, Nicholas! Scoundrels are easily outfaced; and I had word of their design. The next assault may be shrewder. This pair were for snatching their own ends, in the unquietness of the time; 'tis too early yet for reprisals. But those will come: some such a harrying as Judge Jeffreys made, after the '85. We must be forearmed . . ." Presently he went on: "Our weakness is, that without your consent I have no legal status, protecting you. Heaven knows and you know, I'm the last person your poor father would have chose as guardian to you. Yet men dying violently are not expected to make wills; and if you bear me out we may carry it——"

He explained then, that till I came of age I was debarred by law from controlling my own estate. Both lands and money must be administered by a guardian, whom my father's will could appoint. "But your father having left no will—you are sure of that, I suppose?"

"I went through his papers. And Mr. Pardshaw tells me no will was entrusted to *him*."

"By law then the guardianship devolves on me, since I'm your nearest of kin. You can object to me—as he no doubt would have done; but in that case the Law steps in as your guardian. And the Law—well you may be sure, the Law will not exert itself to save Yottenfews! If you accept me, we work jointly . . . but remember, your choice is free." He began telling me what he had already done; and my old mistrust shamed me more, when I found how he'd schemed and sacrificed himself on my account, claiming no help from me. The price of the six eighteen-pounder guns, and three more to follow them, was £216 even at the narrow margin my uncle had left himself, in order to gain the contract; which having gained, he had advised the Master-General of Ordnance that he'd waive payment as an act of loyalty to the Whigs: and that though some had shewn but a lukewarm adherence to His Majesty, some knew how to be grateful. And to the Duke of Newcastle (now Secretary-at-War) he had sent a duplicate of this letter, that my lord might not miss his half-share. "For though King George will never see a penny of our gift" he said, "we should be fools to let the whole £216 slide into one rogue's pocket."

"But sir, this spells a very grievous forfeit for *you*?"

He smiled sourly. "They'll reckon I can stand it—and indeed I should carry much less weight with them, if they knew

how near Bigrigg is to bankruptcy ; so respect that confidence, if you please ! ”

I said : “ O sir, you must take our woods after all, it's the least we can do ! ” He laid a hand on my shoulder.

“ You are generous, Nicholas. I know how you value 'em—but we've not reached that yet ; you can help me in other ways.”

“ Command me, sir ” I replied.

For a moment he seemed to ponder. “ Why then, your mere acceptance of my guardianship ” said he “ is the best help possible. It confirms me in an authority which I usurped just now, when I packed those rogues off : I mean, in mastership of this place . . . oh, pray don't think that I intend to quarter myself on you, nor to meddle with your affairs ; I've neither time nor aptitude to turn sheepfarmer ! Yet it were wise, perhaps, if I'd a bed at Yottenfews and lay here once in a while : and headed letters from here—which I've done twice already, writing to the Master-General and the Duke ; I must ask your pardon for that.”

I said : “ That's easy granted. Tell me what I can *do* ! ”

“ We'll work together ” he smiled. And then watching me narrowly : “ Nicholas ” says he, “ do you take any interest in iron-making ? ”

I said, surprised, I'd not thought of it : but that I'd heard it was an art for which much skill was required.

“ More every year——” he told me. He said, in our forefathers' time when they used little iron, each place satisfied its own need. Yet some excelled : namely where oak and ore and water-power lay adjacent. “ Here in Cumberland were all three ; so they've made iron at Egremont since the Romans, and in Furness——” he frowned. “ When Rome fell, in due time came the accursed Papist monks and their bloomeries, spreading among the hills : who hacked and hewed, foreseeing nothing, replanting nothing, squandering God's treasury—then they turned sheep into the desolation they'd made, and patched a gain out of *them*.”

I put in : “ My father told me once——” But he interrupted me.

“ Aye, he told *me* before you were born : ‘ There is a blessing on our sheep ’ he said, ‘ but on your iron there is none.’ I said then and I say still, it is a blasphemy to tax God's providence with man's folly ; for mark you, when Popery was dispossessed the mischief had been done. Now iron was needed, in such

quantity as our barbarous forefathers had not guessed ; and thanks to them (though our abundance remained unsurpassed) it must lie idle. Abroad we went—and go still. When I began, the Swedes sent fifteen thousand tons a year into England : now twice as much. There are not sixty furnaces in the country ; not one, that can put out six hundred tons in a year ! ”

It was all news to me ; but what most held me was the fanatick vehemence of my uncle. His eyes burned, passion entered his voice, his long hands quickened. He came to life, whom I'd thought only half alive. Before, he had moved me only to mistrust a frigidity that I felt in him ; but now to sympathise . . . I was never nearer liking him than that day. And while I listened, scraps of old talk crossed my mind. “ They say pit-coal won't serve you——”

“ So you've seen that far into our trouble ? Aye, there's the bitterness. . . . We've iron and water in this rich heritage that is ours : and the oaks while they lasted. And we've more—transport : the sea at our doorstep, and soon roads—for I'm told one result of this Scots raid will be great roads throughout Cumberland. And above all by God's beneficence, though His oaks have been squandered, we've got coal : coal in such wealth as nowhere else, past man's compute, and cheek by jowl with the ore ! Yet, useless . . . ”

Now he began discovering me some of this mystery, in words I could understand. In coal, it seemed, there was a sulphurous compound which upset the chymistry of the iron, making it impure. In Salop they used coal to smelt their ore : but with no profit, since the iron thus made must be re-tempered with charcoal. As well use charcoal from the start, my uncle sneered. There was more promise, he believed, in a product of coal which he named coke : a cindered coal, such as was used already (he explained) in the devil's business of malt-making. Yet the impurity persisted ; and further, coke required more blast than their water-bellows could blow. “ It may be ” he said “ that we shall presently find some way to roast coke purely ; or it may be that with a stronger smelting-blast the impurity could be purged. But in this we are still at a *non plus* : and charcoal at famine-prices——”

He told me, as long as sixteen years ago, one William Wood came to Whitehaven, having pledged himself to the Government to make ten thousand tons of pit-coal iron a year, at twelve pound the ton. “ At the year's end he brought them sixteen

tons : ten worthless, when the King's gaugers tested it, and the odd six he'd made with charcoal ! Yet if the coal had served him as he hoped, I think he'd have kept his boast ; but he'd not mastered it—nor we neither. I tell you, Nicholas, the wealth of India will not match ours in Cumberland, once that coke-secret is learned ! ”

I asked questions, and heard more wonders—for wondrous my uncle made it seem, this struggle of men with the dour earth to compel it to their advantage : stranger than treasure-hunting tales from travellers in far lands, since it went on beneath my eyes from year to year, and I'd not suspected it. And I don't doubt, he read me like a book and perceived how its magic gripped me ; for he asked suddenly :

“ Will *you* come to Cleator, boy ? ”

“ To see your works ? ”

“ Or take a hand in them. I've no son.”

But I said : “ My work's here——”

“ That's answered, then . . . all the same, you'd find much to interest you ; and Christmas is your slack time ? Come merely, and visit us. I've two reasons for asking : first, it lies on my conscience you are too lonely here——” his cold fingers touched mine. “ Grief, my boy, is ill company ; when it pleased God to take my wife, I learned that.”

“ And your second reason ? ” I asked. Eldon smiled.

“ Plain selfish ! I'd be glad to see you there : and my girl too, now you've met. And I'll add still a third. Who knows but your fresh wits may jump to solve our perplexities, if iron attracts you ? Nay, I am serious ! It's happened before that a new mind, inspecting some old problem, has seen the answer in a flash where elder heads have lain sleepless ; and you're no dunce, I'm assured.” He leaned towards me, earnest : “ Some such flash might save Yottenfews ! For I've shot *my* bolt, Nicholas ; I'm nearer the bottom of my purse than any one knows—except you.”

“ I'll come——” I promised . . . While he talked, I'd made up my mind. He was right : I'd moped here in a dull lethargy, which did no service either to my father or the place he had loved. Let me plunge myself into Cleator and its curious arts for awhile, they'd distract me at any rate. As to my uncle's further plea, that I'd be useful to *him*—well, no doubt he knew how to flatter me ; yet it was not all vanity that drove me, but the bare hope that (studying under one so shrewd, and coming

fresh to the business) my raw wits might stumble on some lucky idea which should help square my debt.

And here I'd guessed closer than I knew. For already his subtlety was planning to use my wits, as you shall learn : though by no means as I expected.

Alone, I was about to hang my father's sword where it belonged, when Hannah slipped in. "Thou's had a lang crack !" she sniffed. "He's after t' woods again, I'll be sworn ?" But I sent her about her business, telling her the woods were not threatened. . . . It was not of the woods nor (heaven forgive me) of the sword that I was thinking just then, but of my cousin Barbara : who drew me more potently to Egremont than either reason or vanity could have done.

XIV

PHILOSOPHY prevented Mr. Paradise from surprise, when he heard my resolve to see Cleator. Instead he joked on it. "The ubiquitous Xenophon" he informed me "sojourned among outlandish hills to observe the iron-trade of the Chalybs—Cleatorites of his day. He reports them unneighbourly : ἔσφαττον ὧν κρατεῖν δύναιντο, καὶ ἀποτέμνοντες *et caetera*—but your classics are rusting, I'll translate : 'They cut the throats of any whom they could master, and then cut off their heads !' Therefore walk wary ; you'll find Cleator barbarous indeed, after here. What says friend Balbus ?"

"The same as you, in his fashion——" And I told him how Rothery had received the news that I would take a holiday learning iron : "What, a holiday wi' yon savages ? Eh well, nowt so queer as folk !"

"To me the portent" said Paradise "is that our uncle should evince this affection. What's his end, hey ? Does the man offer partnership ? *Timeo Danaos*—— !"

I explained, Eldon had foregone a great sum for me : and was now hoping my green wits might bud, where expertness had withered. Paradise shook his head.

"The man's not reached second childhood—nor thou yet budded from thy first ! There's more, here——" But he would discuss no further. In any case I was not going yet ; for his holiday ran into January, and after this I should have less chance

to entertain him. Also the snow which had been threatening over Christmas-tide now fell thick, and I must lend Will a hand : young Tyson being still in his fever, and George Huthwaite a sore miss.

So before dawn, with cat-ice snapping under us, I and Paradise rode to Thornholm : Rake following, at first doubtfully, but after Calderbrig with more heart . . . Rake came no farther than the bridge, the day we started for Cockermouth : being loth (I think) to stir out of Yottenfews, in case my father should return and he unaware. But seeing us take the Thornholm turn, he likely assured himself that this road could not lead him anywhere out of his own country. At Thornholm, Will and two lads and a half-dozen of our working-dogs were awaiting us ; and we struck into the fells.

I have told how we beat the earlier snow by bearing hay to our sheep ; which would have sufficed them, if the weather had lifted as we hoped—for we are seldom troubled with a heavy fall till late January. But this year we had it ; almost down to the in-land, it lay—feathery-white on the lower slopes, where dead bracken fretted it : and above that, fold on unbroken fold like a blanket drawn across the fells' shoulders. We durst not let the sheep bide : partly because it were impossible to bear enough food for them, partly because we must be sure that none of them had got drifted in that white waste, which looked so innocent, and was so deadly to their poor lives. At first I plodded in Will's steps, while dawn flushed slowly into crocus ahead of us and the daystar hung in the sky ; but where Worm twists, black beneath its hanging bank, he and I parted company : Will taking Kinniside, I slanting up the other flank of the ravine towards Caw Fell.

All that forenoon we worked. It was still and not cold when the sun climbed, the tops very clear, with a good number of our beasts congregated there (the wise ones choose the tops in snow, to save themselves getting drifted) and the air taut with silence, as though no life had stirred hereabouts since the start of the world. If I looked west I could see Will and his gray bitch a mile away, firm dots against the snow, skirting slowly round Lankrigg. Once from Iron Crag I sighted one of our lads on Revelin with his sheep streaming in front of him, and heard him whistle his dog. The other I should not see till we were back ; for he was combing our west bounders, Blakeley and Heckbarley, whence the stripling Calder begins. At last, when

I had gathered all that Nan and Rake found in my territory (and those two searched every doup and gill, covering more ground in a few hours than I'd have done in a week) I drove my regiment down to Thornholm, with Will's converging ; and we had barely penned them in the in-land when the two lads joined us with theirs.

Bone-weary we all were—except the dogs, who had done most of that day's work and now broke off to salute each other, after their kind. We snatched a meal in Will's kitchen (old Paradise had it ready for us, and served us, cracking his jests) but hastily, for there was much to do in the few hours of light remaining ; and before long we were outside again with the baaing multitude, counting their heads. This was the touchstone of our labour : how many missing ? A score, I made it : and the elder lad near as much (the younger had dropped asleep with his head in his dinner-plate, and Will would not rouse him). But Will who had made his count in half our time said, fourteen : " And I ken where they're at : in Latterbarra or Long Grain, the way t' wind's been settin' ! " So we set out for Latterbarrow first, that being nearer ; and this time Paradise came along with us, for he'd never seen drifted sheep.

He asked us how deep they'd be, and would they not suffocate : and if we failed to find them before dark, how long could they stay alive. " Two weeks " says Will ; " or I've known a hardy yow last three weeks. They're snug, d'ye see, and they live on t' grease from their fleeces ; but they're no better for't, and a lot'll die afore that. If none's dead awriddy, we're doin' well ! "

The lad who had dropped asleep soon came pelting after us, much ashamed at his lapse. In about half an hour we reached Latterbarrow—a strait gill, with the west sun now filling it : but enough drifted snow in it to have whelmed scores. The dogs began searching ; and before long the veteran Rake proved his worth. On the clean surface of a drift were certain yellow stains, like snuff in an old man's beard ; from some of which, a thin steam rising warned us that these first ones were not far under. Now the dogs squatted curious on their haunches, while we humans fell digging : Paradise too. And very tenderly Will drew them out when we came at them, one by one, and fed them from bottles of the milk we had brought, wrapped warm in woollen stockings: their yellow eyes staring at him mutely, neither fearful nor glad. But others were buried deeper, and to recover these

Will ordered our work like the cunning engineer he was, trenching crosswise among the boulders, lest our snow-walls collapsed on diggers and all. So we brought nine out, well pleased . . .

Do I spend too long in recounting our labour? I can imagine that to city-folk a sheep is only a sheep, and of no consequence beyond the six or seven shilling she might fetch. But I know that when we had saved our lot, and saw them stand huddled together—in twilight now, dingy against the snow, their glassy eyes watching us—we counted our pain rewarded. I stole a glance at old Paradise, and there were tears on his cheek. "O Nick" he whispered, "thou hast taught me that which was outside my philosophy! When they sing 'Shepherds watched their flocks,' I shall remember this day——"

It was too dark to try farther. We had the assurance of the dogs, that none remained here at least; if we were any short, Will said they'd be in Long Grain two miles away, and must stop till to-morrow. At a word, Rake and Nan took over our little flock and urged them gently towards Thornholm. In the quiet dusk we gathered up our spades and lurched after them, half asleep.

XV

PARADISE had returned to school, when I rode up to Cleator with my uncle for a first sight of his mines. They were outside the village—Bigrigg, the place was called—where the ground climbs from Keekle beck; and on our way he told me about the ore, how the beds lie, and how the crude rock is won from them. In some parts of England, he explained, it must be mined like coal, with shafts and drifts and much labour: but here lies so near the top that you may come at it quarry-fashion, almost anywhere from Egremont to Cleator Moor. "Cleator village is built on it. And when Bigrigg and Cleator are picked clean, say in another hundred years, there's this ground beneath us——"

"Marshland?" I doubted, as our horses splashed through.

"I assure you, some day when men are forced to it, they'll box the Keekle in wooden troughs—oh, it could be done!—and win a million tons from this bottom. We shan't see it; yet 'twill come——"

We climbed the brow and reached the first of the workings: a great pit, open like a quarry—they call these "opencast

mines." It ran deep into the hill ; but its floor tilted towards the mouth we had entered at, so that water could drain off into Keekle bottom. We advanced farther, and I saw what sort of earths the miners had sheared through, for the walls were as striped as bacon. First came a rind of gravelly stuff with grass fringing it, fifty feet overhead ; then a deep band of quarried rock, which he told me was limestone ; and below this a deeper band, the ore itself, haematite as he named it—for indeed it was the very hue of dried blood. Not far off, a terrace of this band was covered with gangs of workmen : some shovelling, some wielding crowbars, some swinging hammers rhythmically as they stood grouped round a drill. But near us, where the ore had been pared to its foundation, there was no more red rock but a pink-mottled shale that put me in mind of robins' eggs ; my uncle pointed to this. They had pierced through it, forty feet he said, with no profit ; so now as fast as they stripped off the limestone above, they shot it down to this shale—like the mole, following their line of gain and ejecting their waste behind them : " For our problems are similar ; in his case as ours, 'tis the rubbish that costs most dear ! "

He showed me how ore was won, by methods varying with the solidity of the rock. Here they were drilling lines of jumper-holes, to split off a mass with wedges ; there, they lit fires against the face to make the heat do their job ; but in some beds they must pack their deep jumper-holes with gunpowder, and rend all the cliff, and break the debris with pick-axes. Then at his office he had specimens of less common ores. Kidney-ore, he showed me—but I'd found that along our beaches and always hated it ; bulbous and obscene-looking stuff it is, like bubbles of giants' blood—and by contrast, a lump as prickly as an urchin-shell with crystals of black and white, lovely to see : and browns, and purples.

He had business waiting him at the office ; so he put me in charge of his forge-overman, to be shown what I liked. One pit was hewn from level ground, with no escape for the water : which must be raised, and the ore too, with pumps and windlasses worked by horse-ginns from above. I asked, had my uncle such new-fangled steam machines as the Whitehaven colliers ? But he said nay, they got their coal for nothing in Whitehaven ; but the horses were near as good : " And a horse can't blow itself up, neether ! " he added without a smile. . . . We'd have laughed over that, at Yottenfews ; but I found here among the

mining-folk a certain grimness prevailing—between my uncle and this Mossop, for instance, and between Mossop and his gangs. He gave me civility, but no friendliness : very different from home.

I now asked, could I see iron made : for the miners were only a sort of quarrymen, but smelting a mystery. My guide stared at me with a look of gloomy contempt. "Ye're too late" says he. "Ye could have seen some bonny castin' done, when the Duke's guns was bein' handle't ; t' furnace is out, now !" So I asked what became of all the ore that the miners were still shifting. He shrugged : "It's shipped off—to them as can deal wi' it ; *our* job's not what it was ! We're idle, idle . . . if we weren't, I'd lack time for chatterin'. We'll be smeltin' next month though, now this fresh wood's come in——"

It seemed that in return for making the Duke's guns they had been allowed to buy certain oak-stocks (government-controlled, said Mossop) somewhere out Carlisle way. The gun-teams had fetched this timber home, twelve hundred cords of it, now being charcoaled. He took me to see. On a flat sheltered field the colliers had built up their first kiln, like a great beehive. Within, he said, were cords of wood stacked on end : then covered with leaves and sand and pit-coal dust, and set smouldering. It would burn thus four days. But this month was poor for coaling (wind or rain doing it no good) and the colliers must watch with vigilance, patching the crust if it grew thin, or opening vent-holes round the base if the heat dwindled. Then, the smoke ceasing, four more days must pass till the charcoal was drawn out. Could they have let this green oak dry till May, said Mossop, it would yield half as much again ; but they'd been hard-set to buy timber anywhere, and must manage.

Yet he admired the bargain which my uncle had struck, getting wood at all. "Now we'll be makkin' our own iron howivver ! For sithee, them that mines and doesn't mak', they throws t' best profit away. We'd made gey little for a long time, till t' Duke rescued us—and most o' *his* we fired with peat ; terrible wasteful, peat is ! But they say 'tis an ill wind blows no good ; and the Duke's fill't some empty bellies——"

Many extra hands had been engaged on the Duke's order, he said. Now these were idle. Some would be re-hired, presently ; for this new timber might make thirty ton of iron, if the coaling went well. I asked what happened to the rest of the idle men.

"They'll work in t' coal-pits if they're lucky, and their

bairns too. If they aren't—they'll not be the only ones ; there's good men with families in Cleator hasn't worked this three year."

"But what happens to *them* ?"

Mossop looked at me sombrely. "What happens folks as can't afford to eat? That's a daft question, mister—ask thy uncle, he knows!"

He began speaking of other things, and in particular of news from Carlisle which the gun-teams had brought back. The Duke lost no time getting his guns to work ; and on the night the second batch arrived, he made a breach in the old castle-wall that a dog might creep in at. Next morning the rebel garrison surrendered without terms : since when the Duke had left for London again, handing his prisoners to the deputy-governor General Howard, who jailed them in the cathedral—marvellous lousy and feverous, so that a small-pox was feared : this General Howard refusing all petitions from the Chancellor very haughtily, and still claiming the bells. But the prisoners were soon to be sent down to Chester and Lancaster, to await trial : "Nobbut a waste of time, that is ! Verdict's fixed aw'riddy——" Meanwhile the Prince with what remained of his array had vanished into the highlands. They'd found a bloodstained coat, thought to belong to him, in Carlisle where he had lodged ; he was dead, some whispered. The lowland Scots gave him no welcome on his retreat, but were long since returned to allegiance. The rebellion was over indeed . . .

Towards dusk my uncle found me watching the charcoaling, and desired me to dine with him ; so we rode down to the great house.

XVI

SHE SAT at the foot of my uncle's table, in a white silk dress flowered in gay colours : a gleam of earrings in her hair dusky as night. Between the three of us were candles on silver dolphins' backs—their flame not seen, its image sleepy-drowned in the depths of the polished wood—whose light reached no farther than the table-edge, leaving the room dark, and so still that in our lulls of talk I feared she must surely hear my heart beating ; for she was changed, and gracious to me to-night, more than I'd dared dream.

Eldon asked how she had spent her day ; but she answered

off-hand. She did not question him in turn, and it seemed clear she was indifferent either to his interest in her, or to the life which he lived so intently at Bigrigg. More than once that night it occurred to me that my uncle, despite his wealth and his authority and this great elegant house, was a lonely man. I perceived though, she wondered why he should have wished to instruct me in his affairs : or why I should seek instruction. By and by she asked, rather mockingly, if I planned to forswear sheep.

I said, the sheep could manage their own business awhile, and I found iron mighty interesting : "And ironfolk too—they're a strange breed to us at Yottenfews ; I'd learn more of them." She raised her eyebrows at that.

"They're beasts, you'll find : below beasts, when they are crossed."

"But we're one stock, if you go back ! What change there is must rise out of their employment——" I meant no ill, but I saw I had vexed her. She and my uncle exchanged looks. Then she went on :

"If that were so, they should be less brutish than your yokels (whom they despise, I've heard) and more content with their lot ; for their skill wins higher wages——" I suppose I looked unconvinced ; it seemed to me there could be no comparison between their labour of hewing, and the resource and multifold experience that our folk brought to their job. "Come, cousin !" she challenged me. "You'll not dispute that our barbarians have means to refine themselves, if they liked ?"

"I don't know their wages."

Eldon said gloomily : "Two pence the hour, I have to pay miners nowadays : and foundrymen more. Besides which their wives and bairns can find employment at Whitehaven in the coalpits, where a boy six or eight year old earns his three pence a day !" And I was silenced ; I had not supposed these fellows could make so much. "How do your shepherds do by that ?" cried my cousin.

I confessed, less lavishly. True, our folk's pay was mostly in kind (gardens and cottages I mean, and dairy-stuff, or wool to make into clothes) but I could not pretend they had the iron-workers' chance to save money. Nor could their bairns earn : if indeed it were God's wish that a bairn should toil in the pit, which I much doubted . . . but it was not for me to set my view

against my uncle's in this, at his own table. So I just said, they were content.

"Content, hey? Not so, with us! Our dregs detest us and would cut our throats if they dared, so we're reviled as bad masters; while your oafs feign a meek humility, and touch caps to you—and you farmers take credit for that. Do you know why they rest content, as you pride yourselves? Foh, it's never crossed *your* mind at least, I can see!" But her father intervened.

"Nay girl, you've put your question, let him answer it for himself—he can answer, I'll warrant!" He had watched her, half smiling, as though pleased to see in her a fierier spirit than his; but he was too urbane a host to let her monopolise our discussion. "Well, Nicholas?" says he—and if he was sneering, it did not appear: "What's your recipe for the Arcadian concord of Yottenfews? 'Tis a secret *we* lack."

But I was tongue-tied, vexed that I had caused this rift in an evening which promised so fairly, and knowing Barbara alert for whatever defence I made, to turn it to my derision. Yet how should Barbara perceive (who despised her own ironfolk as beasts, and our shepherds as clodhoppers) that our concord at Yottenfews was founded in common respect? My father could have explained to her, that Huthwaites, Tysons, Rotherys had lived here as long as we, and as proudly: and that each side knew t' other for as good a man as himself. And they in turn could have explained (though they'd never have troubled to) that John Fleming was "sir" to them of their freewill, not because chance ordained that he owned Yottenfews and they didn't. They approved his authority. For they knew he could do as dexterous a job as they, and as toilsome: and was entitled to the best from them, giving his own best. . . . Then, she'd spoke of their "feigned humility"; I could have laughed, to think how a week's labour on the fell with them might have cured her of that idea.

Meanwhile she expected my reply; but what I burned to say, and what I could bring myself to say to her (angered as she now was) would not mingle. All I durst risk, was to suggest that maybe our shared work made for comradeship: whilst a too sharp insistence on master and servant, paygiver and paytaker, left both sides strangers—which they needn't be, since each was earning his bread. At this she laughed very bitterly:

"Why, I vow you're one of these Humanitarians! O la, you have much to learn——"

"In your ironfields? Aye surely!" I laughed back. "That's why I'm here."

She said, smiling and cold: "Since you *are* here (whatever reason you may have) I'll tell you something you don't know about your business and ours. Your people suffer you, and exhibit a smug content, because they know they're your masters! If you did not exist, they'd plant and grub the silly earth and watch their sheep browsing, and their life would be much the same. But to us, our brutes are beholden utterly for every breath that they draw——"

"Even when they're turned idle for no fault?" I rallied her. Her eyes flashed.

"Their employment is ours, their idleness is ours! Save for us, they'd have neither t' other nor one. Our wealth, our brains—for we use brains at our trade, not mere tracts of ugly hills—without these there'd *be* no trade, as there was none till the ironmasters created it. Aye and some day, when brains and wealth produce machines to beat them at what they do so grudgingly . . . for that's coming, ain't it, sir?"

"Not yet" says my uncle. "But it will."

"When it does, we'll weed out our grumblers as the cottonmasters have begun to weed theirs! Our brutes are not so barbarous but they foresee this, and fear us. But yours—lud, cannot you perceive that they're content because they have naught to fear? *You'll* produce no machines; you're immobile since Abraham——"

I said: "We don't want them to fear *us*. But we can pay our shot, and nobody starves for us; whilst iron——" I broke off, remembering my uncle had told me in confidence how badly iron now was. Till to-night, I supposed he'd told her too. But I saw he had not: and indeed wondered if, for all her clever talk, she knew much more about his trade than she did about sheepfarming. So I said, suffering her attack: "At least old Abraham's a good precedent! If he'd made iron instead of raising sheep, he'd likely have done no better."

At that she lost her temper outright. "You're a prig, cousin Nicholas——!"

"But your guest!" says my uncle quietly, in a voice hard as iron itself. "You forget yourself, miss——"

She looked at him, and was dumb . . . He had left us to bandy our own argument all this while, though I doubt not he knew a hundred times as much about our theme as the pair of

us. Now we were at a loss : she sulky, her cheeks aflame at being chidden in front of me ; and myself mortified unbearably, that an evening on which I'd built such hopes was so dashed. Into this breach my uncle stepped, and began talking—smoothly, often very earnestly, but sometimes with his thin smile : till our interest was snared despite ourselves, and our rift closed ; and there seemed nothing in the quiet room but his voice holding us, and his long fingers ivory in the candlelight, pointing his talk.

“ One factor you both overlook ” said he : “ the law of supply and demand—in Nicholas' case, pretty constant : in ours, far less : but in neither controllable by brains nor wealth, being subject to accident. As witness the Duke's guns : a task which first demanded more skilled men than I could easily find, and then left them idle—neither my fault nor theirs, nor yet the Duke's who was himself controlled by a demand outside his arbitrament. Some day, when iron shall be part of England's normal life——”

“ Is it not now, sir ? ” I inquired.

“ Not as your wool is. There are alternatives for iron—why, the very paddle-wheels that work our blasts are wood-built ! But no alternative for woollens——” he smiled at me, “ in our climate at least. Yet some day, iron will be indispensable : iron ships, hey ? ”

Barbara gaped at that. “ But iron can't swim ! ”

“ If you don't overload it, your brass powder-box will swim—and brass weighs heavier than iron. Oh, we'll have iron ships, surely ; shipwrights are everywhere complaining of the wood-famine which cripples *us*. And far more surely, we shall need iron for these new machines Barbara was predicting. Consider this, Nicholas——” and now his long hands were still, his eyes dreamed, his dry voice became alive as it did only when he talked of his iron—“ Consider, when we have established our machines, we shall use them not merely for our instant work—quarrying and mining, forging, building ships—but to make more machines : better, more accurate than we could build 'em now, even had we invented 'em. They'll breed, these new monsters : breed—like sheep at Yottenfews. And for themselves and all their progeny of more machines they'll need iron, iron, iron ! ”

“ Which we'll supply——” she put in.

He nodded. “ Supply and demand . . . the new demand will give such impetus to our old trade as we've not dreamed

of : and attract brains to it, which just now it sadly lacks—for I fear Barbara overrates our brains as much as she scorns your shepherds'——”

(I'd thought the same : but held my tongue now, lest I should stir up our old feud.)

“ But indeed I surmise ” his quiet voice went on “ we'll need more wit to rule machines than we ever shall for inventing 'em : where if we fail, they'll play the tyrant with us yet—masters and men alike. D'ye follow me, Nicholas ? ”

“ Nay sir, you think too far ahead for *my* wits ! ” said I.

“ I think logically.”

Says Barbara, dubious : “ But sir, the man who makes machines will rule them—and his fellow-men too ? ”

“ Less simple than that ! You hold, machines will so dispense with artisans that we masters finish supreme——”

“ So ' Prudens ' argues.”

“ Aye, you've been reading the tame expert of the *Gentleman's Magazine*—a very purblind philosopher ! Yet suppose he is right : the artisan disappears ; he starves, I infer—or perhaps he invents a machine himself, and becomes one of us.”

“ You're not serious, sir ? ”

“ I assure you ! The machine you were citing—Kay's I mean, which the great cotton-masters are beginning to use—was not invented by a gentleman nor even a rich man, but a mere mechanic of Colchester : which put his masters out of countenance, not himself.”

“ Foh ! It don't put my argument out of countenance ” she rebelled. “ For suppose, sir, an artisan of ours made some such invention—a machine to turn pit-coal into coke, we'll say ; for I've often heard you wish that. You'd buy it from him, no doubt ? ”

“ Very eagerly ” sighed my uncle.

“ And though he throve by our bounty, his machine which was henceforth *our* machine would pile up new wealth for us, while many of his degree were thrown idle. That's happening in Lancashire, ' Prudens ' says ! ”

“ For the present, yes ; and he derives his estimate of all futurity from that instance. Yet there are still alternatives—two clear alternatives at least, which have not crossed the simple mind of Mr. Prudens : nor yours neither, I think ? ”

She had no reply to that. And he continued :

“ Some day machines may so multiply, that in one town

we'll need more workmen, making or minding 'em, than exist to-day in all England. Already, you know, we have to legislate to stop them organising gilds against *us* ; should they outnumber us too monstrously we'd be impotent, notwithstanding ! ”

She remained silent, through pique, or because she could not believe such a prophecy. Nor was I readier ; this rancour between class and class, which they found natural, was outside anything I had known. At last I ventured to inquire his second alternative.

He shrugged. “ ’Tis fantastical : and yet not wholly so, for it is based on that same rigour of supply and demand which rules all things. Suppose the machines increase and still increase, till they produce so abundantly that all markets are glutted ? Then prices fall. Push the case logically, they fall so far that it's no longer worth our while to produce. And then——” his tone grew cynical—“ then I suppose we are all ruined equally, masters and men alike ; and our machines rot ; and this land slips back into—jungle ! ”

Says Barbara, in the pause : “ Like Yottenfews, sir, I presume : where Nick will still nurse his sheep ? ” And at this I could not but laugh, so near my thought she had hit, and so demurely she said it . . . I forgot, laughing with her now, how urbanely my uncle had manœuvred us from our bairns' quarrel wherein both of us were to blame : she for some spitefulness, but myself more for blundering feet-first into a comparison of Bigrigg and Yottenfews, in his house.

But Barbara had not forgotten. For soon after, leaving us to our dessert, she said smilingly : “ Well, cousin Nick, we'll dispute further when you have enlarged your outlook at Cleator—or perhaps find we have no longer anything to dispute about ! ” But more she durst not say, in his presence. I knew, for I had seen her eyes when he silenced her. I knew that for all his courtesies, for all her pride and independence, she feared him : as in my secret heart I did still.

XVII

I SPENT the next week at home. There would be no iron made till the coaling was done ; and it was iron-making, not the quarrying of ore, that my uncle desired to learn me. But at home there were still jobs, even round this slack time : and Rothery

full of some design to combat our bracken. Year by year it usurped our intakes, and spread higher up Worm Gill. The shepherds detested it. Not only did its deep shade defeat the grass, curtailing our sheep's livelihood; but it bred "wicks" (the maggot-fly, than which they suffer no worse scourge) and in hot summers when this pest smote them, the poor beasts would make off into ferny gills eluding the shepherds' vigilance, and there die, not found. But the bracken was ill to check; burn it or mow it, it sprang up again worse than ever; its roots ran yards deep.

Last summer, returning with the packhorse train that took our wool-clip to Kendal, Will spent a half-hour at some antique fort that the Romans once built on Hardknott; and above this, he said, there was a meadow terraced with much art from the mountainside, none knew why.

"'Twas their parade-ground" Mr. Paradise put in—I'd sent a horse for him this dinnertime, that he might spend Sunday with me. "I've inspected the place."

Will laughed. "I might have kenn't! And likely ye noticed, sir, there's summat very queer to it, even yet?"

"Why yes" says he. "There's a great mound they built—a *rostrum*, for their commander to lecture 'em, midway along one side. Not fifty yards off, there's a knoll of rock he could have used just as well. But no, their rule said midway! So there they constructed one afresh, and ignored the other: a most Roman proceeding."

"It sounds daft, to me" said Will.

"But not to Rome. Those fellows lived and fought and died like Shakespeare's blusterer, by the book of arithmetick. And 'midway,' the book ordered. . . . What queerness did you remark?"

Will said: "Bracken. T' bracken thrives ivverywhere on yon heaf, above t' fort and under: but on t' parade-ground or whativver it was, not a sprig! How long d'ye reckon it'll be since Roman days, Mr. Paradise?"

"Fifteen hundred year."

Will slapped his knee. "Well then! If they kenn't some way to kill t' bracken for good, what's stoppin' us, eh? We're more fell-wise nor ivver them Eyetalians was; this spring, we'll fettle't!"

"But how, Will?" For we had tried so often.

"Come spring, thou'll see——" He began asking Paradise

what made them build in so outlandish a spot : and what they did in the winter.

“ Why, nursed their gout ! And dreamed of Italy, and maybe wondered why they were in Britain at all, if they were given to wondering : which I question. And for sport, shot rabbits and ran chariot-races down Hardknott to the great detriment of the sheep.”

“ Can ye shut rabbits with a bow-an’-arrer, then ? ” Will grinned.

And old Paradise replied gloomily—for his own gout was vexing him this winter : “ You can shoot anything with a bow-and-arrow, my Balbus—except yourself : its one fault ! ”

I had told Will how Uncle Eldon repulsed the Commissioners, but he seemed unplacated ; I think it irked him to owe anything to a man whom he so disliked. As for my spending time at Cleator, he made no comment ; and when I added that I’d dined at Eldon’s grand house, he growled merely : “ Him and his stone balls—— ! ” On Monday, I rode back with Paradise and on into Whitehaven : my errand, to bargain with the tannery over some pigs’ skins. We killed round Candlemas, when the acorns ran out ; a hog in bacon was worth fourteen shilling or thereabouts, and the price rising ; but it paid us at Yottenfews to cure and eat our own, and sell their skins separate ; and this year, between French alarms and the Rebellion and all, Will thought they’d fetch more. My business done, I hung a little in the streets where the idle miners consorted.

I’d seen them often : but now with fresh interest, feeling we’d some sort of comradeship, and pondering what Eldon said. They were clustered everywhere, this bright morning : outside the alehouses, or on the dock where an incoming skipper might give one a groat to carry his bag, or listless in the gray streets. You could tell from the ruddiness of their worn clothes how long they had been idle : just as in fields outside the town, where coaldust soils everything, you guess a lamb’s age from the grime its fleece has picked up. Some were faded as well as foul—men who earned nothing these three years, as my uncle’s overman had informed me ; others new-ruddied, yet not working—turned off last week, maybe, when the Duke’s guns were dispatched ; and with these, others who had never earned and possibly never would, wizened in their teens, the shadow of death in their gray faces. But indeed (I found later) death was

plainly to be read in many a one, even of those still working ; for their employment tends to breed a sort of wasting disease, so that the lungs rot. And among them moved many little children, dull-eyed and bandy-legged, bent from toil, shrunken in their limbs, the big joints stretching the skin.

Some stared fierce on me, or cursed me as I rode by. Some begged, sullen or abject. Yet what most chilled my heart was to see the indifferent ones ; who neither cursed nor stirred, but seemed to gaze through me with no life behind their eyes, starved out of anger or hope. These were more numerous than four year back, when my father took me through Cleator ; then smouldering anger was what I'd felt everywhere in the ironfolk ; now on all sides, despair. . . .

For indeed times had never been so bad, vowed my uncle : but thinking more of his own losses than of this desolation, remote from his great house. Yet he must be aware . . . Mossop's words came back to me : " What happens them as can't afford to eat ? Ask thy uncle, he knows—— ! " What happened was here, plain if you had eyes, and he was often in Whitehaven : my cousin too. Did she never ponder them, she who had openly approved their idleness because it kept wages down ? Eldon was less outspoken ; yet certainly he was part-responsible, he and she and their class . . . our class ? I had not thought of this till now ; but there was no shirking it. In Egremont or London (aye, or at Yottenfews) we better sort dwelt secure, and prospered diversely, yet with room enough between us and the abyss ; and made laws to check the dwellers in the abyss from uniting for their own betterment. And my uncle as magistrate (I too some day, if I chose) had power to define their wages : and to commit them, if their hate flared into mutiny, for presuming to breach our peace. Further, my uncle owned the very earth and could forbear to work it if it brought him too little gain, while they had nothing between them and penury but this earth ; so that owning it, he owned them . . . " Their employment is ours, their idleness is ours " Barbara had said—and terrible it seemed to me when she said it, in the quiet candlelight up at Egremont : but far more terrible here.

Till I wondered : What if there were a third alternative to those which Eldon proposed : if machines, or some devil's-jugglery of his Supply and Demand (which I couldn't fathom) neither starved these chaps out of existence quite, nor made fresh work to feed them : if they multiplied in their idleness,

like a mill pond whose outlet has got jammed and no one knows how to fettle it, till at last the waters burst and overwhelm all? In Whitehaven such a catastrophe might not be far off. Had Eldon foreseen that? Four years ago my father vowed that, were he his brother, he'd not walk Whitehaven after dark; since then, things had worsened; and although it pleased Barbara, in the security of their great house, to deride their red savages' impotence, I was unquiet for her sake, and wished with all my heart that I'd wit to help towards some cure.

Yet it was present shame, rather than any future fear, possessed me as I climbed out of Whitehaven, staring back now and then at its gray bowl among the collieries that impended it; grimed, ugly terraces which Paradise in his glum mood the other night had called the Hanging Gardens of Hell. My conscience, new-waked, pestered me with miseries long neglected. In vain I assured myself it was no fault of mine (nor perhaps none of my uncle's) that the world was not sorted more equably: that I went clothed and fed and mounted this bright morning, and heard the first lark sing, and saw my life and dreams and a man's job ahead; while down there, men's lives rotted.

XVIII

INLAND towards Cleator there is a strip of open countryside with the sea-tang blowing over it: and beyond it, Cold Fell and Blakeley (our own bounders) and Revelin where we send up our hives in June for the heather at Bee Wall End. But near Bigrigg the ore begins, and road and beck grow red, and the ugly cottages crowd together.

At the ironworks I found them busy: not smelting yet, but at the last stage of their charcoaling, which they told me had gone well. The kilns smoked no longer; their tops had sunk, and the vent-holes been sealed four days ago; now the grimed colliers, breaking open each kiln-foot, drew out their charcoal and were loading it into corves. Old Mossop seemed in better humour than I found him before, and expected to smelt tomorrow. "Your uncle's tellin' us, ye're to see aught there is to see."

"Your trade-secrets?" I rallied him.

"Nay, we've no secrets here! If we had, we'd be better off——!" He led downhill, and showed me mounds of smoul-

dering stuff which I took to be charcoal ; but it was ore, being roasted by slow heat. " We mun chase t' sulphur out " said he. " Yon's our first-roastin'."

" With pit-coal ? " I asked, surprised ; for a great stack of it lay near by.

" Aye, pit-coal serves—not but what charcoal makes a sweeter job on't, if 'tweren't so dear. Roastin' takes time, sithee ! "

" How long ? "

" Ten days, this lot's been kindle't. We dursn't pinch it to less——"

As we moved on, I felt the turf quake and saw water oozing up round my boots. " You picked a dry spot for your charcoaling—better than this " said I. " Or does damp favour roasting ? " He pulled up, and stared at me.

" Your uncle tell't me you were a smart lad ! " he muttered ; and lowering his voice, for there were men at work within earshot : " Sithee, here's summat ye'll see nowhere else in all Cumberlan'—roastin' on wet ground ! Mr. Fleming inventit it—he's a gey clever 'un, is your uncle. He reckons a wet roast betters t' quality—some sort o' chymical effect, he says—and that's why he picked here. Keep that to thyself ! "

" But the men must see, surely ? "

Old Mossop shook his head. " Them sort sees nowt ; or if they do they've more sense nor to blether it—jobs is scarce. I nivver heard tell any other ironworks kenn't our trick—but *thou's* marked it, howivver ! It's about the only mak' o' secret we've got——" He was chuckling ; and he'd thou'd me—as Will would sometimes thou my father, when a joke rose between them or when they toiled equally at some back-breaking task. I perceived then, this dour man loved iron and was proud of it : and was proud of my uncle, whose wits furthered iron : and of me, oddly, as my uncle's kinsman who had guessed the trick of his roast. But that his pride was at all tinged with personal love (as Will's was bounteously) I much doubt ; and I'll swear neither he nor any man at Bigrigg Mine, however honourable his place, ever thou'd my uncle . . . Soon we saw Eldon Fleming below, where the blast-furnaces and paddle-wheels and a big trip-hammer stood, not far from Keekle beck ; and long before we got to speaking range old Mossop gave over chuckling, and we fell mum ; as though the sight of that lean figure froze our

humanity, making us sensible of the hard barrier between iron-master and man.

He stood with his clerk at the bank-foot, watching the corves sledged ; for since the coaling was done higher up, each collier loaded his corf on a sled, and perched in front of it, and checked its descent with his boot-heel : as our fellows bring down peat. Very skilful they were at it : till one sled, bumping down too fast, got out of hand and was wrecked. A shower of charcoal scattered everywhere in the red muck of the hillside ; and sled and collier and the empty corf rolled ham-sam to the bottom. I began laughing—till I saw the piteous fear in the lad's eyes, as he stood and faced my uncle. "I'm right sorry, Mr. Fleming sir ! I'll gather it, dinner-hour, and dry it off in the sun——"

"You may do so, and take it home with you. I've no more use for it : nor you neither."

"What, it was nobbut accidint ! " faltered the lad.

"I hire your skill, not your accidents——" And turning sharply to his clerk, my uncle bade him pay this botcher off and deduct the cost of the coal. The lad flushed deep red.

"I'm seven month idle, till last week " he began desperately.

"I am not surprised " said my uncle. "And now take yourself off . . ." I could only stare. At home, such a mishap would have been chid friendly, and the lad warned to mind himself and learn to master his job. But to turn any man idle for one fault . . . My uncle was watching me. "You waste pity there, Nicholas. Believe me, if blundering is condoned there's no end to it : which our present fortunes can't stand—nor need to, since labour was never more plentiful. Come here, I'll show you where iron is made——"

He brought me first to a stone tower, built very massively with its flue open atop : and at the foot, a vent-hole which he said the workmen would seal when the furnace was well kindled. Below this lay a plot of sloping sand like a flowerbed, raked into troughs : with many corves of charcoal stacked, and more arriving each minute. To-morrow or next day, he explained, they'd charge the furnace to the top with charcoal and roasted ore, in layers alternately, and bring their blast into play ; and he showed how blast-snouts were trained on either side of the hearth, through tapering holes, and the blast urged from them by huge bellows. After many hours of this fierce heat, said he, the ore fused ; the true iron sank, the dross floated. Then work-

men, breaking down the seal with rods, let loose the fiery river ; which flowing at will among the channels they had raked for it, cooled into pigs . . . I asked him, why pigs ? And he showed how the channels each derived from a main trough or sow, like rows of piglets being suckled.

" Why then, they'll harden to a great comb " I cried, " too heavy to shift ? "

" But brittle " says he. " At red-heat they can be flogged apart with hammers. Later you shall see."

He showed me bellows, like a smith's but more powerful, driven by a wheel whose water came through wooden conduits from higher up Keekle beck. In old times men puddled iron on open hearths, ore and charcoal together ; but their hearths never reached smelting-heat. The best they achieved was a soft mass, iron certainly, but foul with much dross ; which they would knead with rods till it adhered enough to be transferred to their anvil, and there they flogged the dross out. " I've seen their stuff " said my uncle. " The good, as fine as anything we can turn out to-day : the bad, ludicrous. But good or bad, it was wasteful. If you inspect the slag from those old bloomeries of theirs, you find it still full of ore ; and that's where we've learned better ! " In a blast-furnace you could heat the ore till it ran out pure iron—but brittle, as he'd explained, so that the pigs must go into a second furnace and be refined to a bloom : which bloom, white-hot and soft as cheese, was flogged into bars and plates.

We reached the second furnace : by whose vent was no sloping piggery but an anvil sunk in the earth, huge as an oak-stump, with the trip-hammer resting on it idle, its paddle-wheel dry. This had spurs on its axle which, when the wheel turned, heaved up the hammer till it freed itself and crashed of its own weight, three hundred pound or more I dare say. And here also were more conduits, and another wheel for the blast, and corves of charcoal stacked orderly, and great tongs hung on swinging chains to move the bloom to the anvil ; till my mind reeled at all the skill and money and contrivance that went to this strange trade.

My uncle speaking with his clerk on some matter, old Mossop nudged me ; he had held his peace all this while. " Well ? " says he. " What d'ye think on us ? "

" I'm past thinking " I said. " I never dreamed of such wonders."

"Aye" he growled. "They'd be won'erfuller yet, wi' less rust on 'em——" And I recalled what I'd been told : that for months till the Carlisle order came the furnaces had lain idle ; and would be so again, most likely, when the Carlisle charcoal was spent.

On our return we passed a smoking kiln, I'd not noticed. I asked what kept that charcoal back. My uncle said heavily : "Not charcoal, Nicholas. It's this new coke, we're trying for ; we've not given up hope, yet——"

In his warehouse he brought me to a collection of pigs, labelled in their variety, and bade me consider their fracture ; for at the ends, where they had been snapped off, the iron showed different tints. Some was white, some gray : some dark and coarsegrained with black crystals which (he said) came of too much charcoal in firing. The gray was better, being twice-melted stuff remade from the dark kind : but better still a mixture of the gray with a white, whose tint proved too much ore. Mottled iron, he called it. I asked him what sort the other white pigs were : and was told some were peat-iron, pretty near as good as charcoal-smeltings, indeed. "And this silver beauty——?" But he took a hammer and struck at it ; it flaked off, tinkling.

"A fallacious beauty !" he said.

Lastly he showed me one of the remaining whites : coke-iron, the best he'd yet managed. "But rubbish, potsherd, fit only to break the shins of one's ambition against ! This, *this* is what should make our fortunes in Cumberland, with the coal at our doors ! And still it defeats us. . . ."

I spent much time about the place, after leaving him. At the bank-foot they were now shovelling fuel and ore into the furnace, old Mossop directing them harshly ; and once, for a short while, they opened the paddle-sluice when they had mended some defect in the wheel, and set the big hammer clattering. They were talking and shouting to each other, till I appeared ; but then fell silent, having seen me with Eldon Fleming as I suppose, or being told who I was. And none offered to speak to me. On my way home, by the main gate where the pay-office stood, I saw the lad who had been turned off this morning, waiting to draw his wage or what was left of it when the fine had been knocked out. He glowered at me sullenly. And said I :

"I'm sorry. In a month, if the weather lifts, I'll maybe find

you a job at Calderbrig——” For we had a cart-road to mend.

He spat. “I don’t want *thy* charity.”

“You’re not offered it. A job, I said——” But he swore very foully, and began telling me what I might do with my job for aught he cared ; till I lost temper. “Gan your gait, then, and be damned !” said I. “It’s all one to me.” Which rough answer worked more with him ; for as I turned away, he looked up.

“Thou means well, marra ; but thou can’t put *our* mak’ to sheep. I’ve gan into Scotland, I’ve nor wife nor bairn, thank God ! I’ll can work my way on a ship, or walk afore I’ll be bet. Sithee, yon’s where t’ irontrade’ll thrive from this out, not here. This dam’ spot’s dyin’ . . .”

As I rode in through Calderbrig our chaps were homing from work, kicking the muck off their nailed boots at cottage doors : and women to welcome them, and wood-smoke scenting the dusk. I could have clean forgot that other grimmer world up at Cleator—but for the memory of what I’d seen in Whitehaven town to-day : and my uncle’s cold anger when the sled was spilt, and its consequence : and the red hue of Keekie pools, where the iron tinged them to blood.

XIX

I DID NOT after all see the fires lit next day, farm-work preventing ; but since I knew that the cold furnaces took time to heat, and that their operation would continue two weeks or more, I was content to postpone them. What mattered instantly was that my uncle had engaged himself to dine here and to bring Barbara, on her first visit : and that they would stay overnight. So I came early home : and was upstairs to see their beds were aired and all fit for them, when I heard Paradise calling.

Him I’d not looked for, in mid-week ; but they’d been given a holiday, he said, in honour of Carlisle’s deliverance——

“Weeks ago !” I made fun of him. “Do you dominies never work ?”

“Why then” says he, “if it’s not that, it’s because rumour says the Prince is dead ; or because the French haven’t landed. The true truth being, that our esteemed Head Master is ridden off to Carlisle himself, *eques metuendus lingua*, to inquire after that

bishoprick : which I hear now he won't get." He had brought certain promised books, and hoped he'd be welcome.

"You're that always" I said. His intrusion had dashed me for the moment ; but I reflected, four would make a better party and he could keep Eldon in talk. "You've come at a right time. My uncle——"

"Hey ?" says he, sharply.

"My uncle dines with me. Will you join us ?"

He hesitated, then nodded. "*Adero fidelis*. Lay me a long spoon !"

"And his girl, Barbara" I continued, as off-hand as I could manage. But he was not deceived.

"So gooseberries ripen early, here ! D'ye think your lady'll approve me ?"

"You know them."

"Him only : and as 'twere, at arm's length. I am not one of the elect, in your uncle's eyes. Too little piety and too long a thirst—but egad, we can't all be virtuous, or that great church he's built at Whitehaven would be too small for us crowding in. Yet you'll see, I know how to comport myself. . . ."

And I blessed the luck that had sent him.

At Egremont, though our night started well, discord crept into it, by my own bungling and my lady's fancy to pervert whatever I said ; but to-night she was all mirth, and myself more assured at my own board, and old Paradise entertaining us. He engaged my uncle, I recall, in a long learned argument about the Isle of Man and the Three Legs, its emblem : and how in ancient times the Greeks who colonised Sicily had favoured that same device. And tailless cats, we debated on : my uncle holding that a Spanish galleon first brought them there, wrecked in Queen Bess's time. Paradise said aye, this Spanish galleon seemed to have brought everything that could not otherwise be accounted for, from Manx cats to Herdwick sheep and the French pox ; not Noah himself had shipped so diverse a menagerie.

Says Barbara to me : "Did they bring smugglers, Nick ? I've a friend, a young swaggerer in the Excise, who maintains smuggling prospers more in Man than in all Europe together." So I bade her ask Mr. Paradise : being in secret much amused to see him sitting here so respectable, and my uncle notorious throughout Cumberland for having put smugglers down. But he accepted the challenge—it would have taken more than me to make old Paradise blush.

"Why sure, Man is the *el dorado* of such gentry, these three-score years!" he declared: and told her (what I'd heard often) that my lord duke of Atholl being King of Man could govern it as he liked, and refused still to levy import-duties, however King George might fume; and that in Douglas the great merchants had warehouses to which all manner of pleasant things were shipped openly, and resold to smugglers who ran them up Solway, cheap. "And here too" says he, looking sideways at Eldon, "till your papa discouraged 'em. Yet I suppose the scoundrels still insinuate them into England some way, on less well-disciplined coasts!"

"What do they run?" she asked.

"Whatever is needed: being ruled by what I have heard called the law of Supply and Demand. Coffee, rum, brandy, muslin from the West Indies, French wines, tobacco, salt, lace, tea—for you ladies will have your tea; I am told, last year you swilled down nine hundred tons of it, of which not a third paid tax, fie on you!"

She laughed. "I suppose you smoked your pipe last year, Mr. Paradise?"

"I did, ma'am; and unless memory fails me I'd a glass of brandy too, now and then. Frugal pastimes, I find 'em. But no tea . . . trust me, tea tans your tender bellies to the consistency of an old boot! You should abjure it, for your own sake if not your country's."

"Our bellies" she sighed "are better able to withstand the tea than our purses the tax. Five shillings a pound—la, the stuff itself can't cost that much?"

"Sevenpence in Holland, I believe" says Paradise, "and brandy four shillings the gallon; but cost and value don't square. The price of such goods rests not basically upon tax (the smugglers pay no tax) but on our greed in desiring 'em——"

"I don't" said my uncle: "yet must pay the tax, if I drank a mouthful a year."

"Your virtue, sir, is exceptional: *quod fere nunquam*, as Tully saith; rare as a five-legged lamb——" My uncle looked down his nose at that, but Paradise continued: "*Vox populi* or rather *venter populi* is the test! If we drank naught but milk (which Bacchus forbid) the tax on tea and brandy would shift to that, and all our smugglers turn dairymen."

"They'd be more honestly employed."

"But less romantically" put in Barbara, "don't you think, Mr. Paradise?"

"No ma'am, I do not. They're tradesmen like us three fellows here, whether we sell brandy, milk, wool, iron or the philosophy of the ancients. If they charge more than we, they risk more—*videlicet* a musket-ball in the astonished guts, or hanging, or transportation: or to be pressed for service in His Majesty's ships, which they say is horrider than all three. And yet" he mused, reaching for the Thornholm jar, "judged by results, they're as good citizens as most of us: bringing much harmless comfort to the poor rustick, who could otherwise afford none."

My uncle said, firm but still urbane: "If you deem alcoholick comfort harmless, Mr. Paradise, I dissent. Round Cleator——"

"In moderation, sir: μηδέν ἄγαν! I had tobacco, tea and salt in mind: but include spirits, used wisely."

"I dissent still. There is no wise use for such stuff."

"Then I'll renounce it—I mean from our present argument, which it does not affect; for indeed he that's resolute to embrate himself will get drunk, smugglers or no."

"Even the poor rustick?" asked my cousin. Paradise wagged his head.

"I blush for him; but I've heard that, in states less blest with smugglers than England, the rustick soon instructs himself to distil his own brew. But sticking to Cumberland——" he turned towards my uncle—"you'll agree, sir, the veriest sensualist can't easily debauch himself on tea, tobacco or salt: which most would lack, but for smugglers. *Ergo*, Miss Barbara, these must be thanked, and the Law even chid a little, for providing and robbing us of such things."

"O sir, I'm with you! If the Law's bilked, it has only itself to blame!"

"It's not bilked, moreover" said Paradise. "*Exempli gratia*, when your poor rustick can't buy smuggled salt he goes saltless; and the Revenue still gains naught . . . but this is no talk for a magistrate's daughter's ears! May I plead privilege, sir?"

My uncle gave his thin smile. "Let's rather rule, the court accepts your argument with a grain of that smuggled salt—which if it were the only contraband they ran, I'd agree with you. But you know very well, sir (for you have owned to it) that

drunkards will still be drinking : that drink is your smuggler's major profit——"

"Not without honour, in *this* country !" Paradise slipped in.

"——And that, were smuggling altogether stopped, our drinking classes would yet willingly pay tax on the poison for which they crave."

"Oh, we'd pay" Paradise agreed. "But rot me, not willingly——!" And I saw my uncle's face tighten. I'd admired more than once how shrewdly he held his own in this fencing-match, especially since the style of it was not his. Old Paradise, even at his most serious, could never resist a jest or a swift *reductio ad absurdum* ; but my uncle's mind worked more gravely—also I fancied he did not much like Mr. Paradise, though they talked friendly enough.

"Sir" he said, now with some asperity, "it is your whim in argument to mock everything, not excluding yourself. But believe me, if you had wrestled with the fiend of drink in this county as I have, and seen the misery shipped in with every cask of brandy from Man, you'd be serious on that at least!"

Mr. Paradise looked at him : his face preternaturally grave, but his eyes twinkling. I feared, knowing him so well, lest he'd riposte with some unlooked-for bawdiness which would outrage my uncle and perhaps drive Barbara from my house. But he said merely, with extreme good humour : "Pray sir, take no offence. I detest sottishness as much as you do ; and I'll concede, your zeal against the spirit-trade would have long since turned Cumberland into a kingdom of God—were it not for the Kingdom of Man!"

At which not only Barbara but my uncle himself had to laugh.

One thing both he and Paradise were agreed on : that the Law itself fostered smuggling. For instance, a lightening of the spirit-tax had discouraged our smugglers much ; but the tax soon revived (a pound the gallon, it was now) and their prosperity with it. . . . Meanwhile old Paradise—out of regard for me, I think, lest our night's harmony should be jeopardised—talked no more of spirits, but wool.

"This abuse works both ways—on exports too, I mean : as Nick here knows to his cost. He can't sell wool abroad, the weavers have seen to that ; and these same knavish weavers,

the Law abetting them, so bate their price that sheep soon won't be worth rearing——”

“Aye, that they do !” exclaimed Hannah who was serving us ; to her last day I never cured her of her knack of breaking in on guests' talk. “If they dropped t' wool-tax, our sheep's coats would turn to gold, my man says !”

Paradise went on with no pause : “And the result as you'd expect : wool smuggled overseas, and neither weavers nor Revenue any richer !” My uncle looked at me narrowly.

“Is that so, Nicholas ? I've not met it.”

I said I'd never heard of sheepfolk running wool out of Cumberland, Europe was too far off : but that in Kent and Sussex, I'd been told, they were still at it.

“Oh, there !” he shrugged as though I had disappointed him. “They've neither law nor order in those parts, and all France for their Man.” Barbara leaned towards me, her eyes bright with mischief.

“O Nick” says she, “when I'm of age and married to some potbellied merchant, I shall give him no peace o' night till he builds me a Manx warehouse ; and you shall run your wool across (I waving a romantick lamp) and we'll grow infamous rich !”

“I'd count your merchant still the richer” said I, reddening.

“Oh, we'll drown *him*” says she, “when the warehouse is once up . . . Can you drown odious husbands in that kingdom, Mr. Paradise ?”

“Drown them or horn them ; you'll do what you like with yours, I dare swear. But your stern parent follows in a Revenue sloop, and hangs Nick at Whitehaven—what then ?”

“Why then” she says, “I shall still have the warehouse, shall I not ? And a lock saved from one of Nick's prize sheep, for remembrance . . .”

We were gay that night, thanks to Paradise. He'd put us at ease ; and my lady showed herself so content with Yottenfews, that my head swam and my hopes soared as high as formerly they'd been dashed. Nor even when our talk shifted to the iron-trade did the least contention thrust in ; indeed a merriment rose out of something Eldon said, which last week could have confused me. He'd assured Barbara that her machines, though they might some day set us all by the ears, were a long way from that at present : “I judge, they'll raise conundrums for your

children to lie awake about, not for you——” And she says, daintily :

“ *Our* children, sir ? Is it to settle an Arcadian match for me, I’m brought here ? ”

He smiled : “ I’d not thought of it. I misdoubt you would make him too unquiet a home ; and indeed after last week’s battle—they fought, Mr. Paradise !—he’ll hardly come courting *you* ! ” Yet I felt he was not displeased, as he might have been ; and this seemed all to the good.

Last week she had left us at dessert. But now, playing host, I could light them to their room-doors. Where I hung talking, foolishly, till she protested she’d not trouble me to help her undress : and so dismissed me, confounded.

I found old Paradise resolute to sit up all night, reading two books he’d bought me—he slept less than any mortal I’ve known. Next morning when I rose he was gone, but we others broke fast together. I rode to Egremont at her side.

XX

THE FURNACE was lit, the pig-bed raked into rows, the vent sealed till the first run-out should be ready. Aloft the fillers shot their charges, barrows of fuel and ore mixed ; and each time they unroofed the kiln to do this, flames licked out brighter than day. Mossop watched the work unremittingly.

He had hoped to cast before dinner ; but with the furnace standing cold, and the soft weather, there was no hurrying her ; by dusk, he reckoned, the first hearthful of iron would run. Yet I found plenty to watch, and to hear too ; for now, where all had been still and idle, was a new world full of busy sound. The thrash and mutter of the wheel, the gurgle of sluices, the great groaning bellows, the muffled roar of the fire prisoned in its thick walls, the barrow-men hurrying : above us a fearsome glare, each time the kiln was fed : below, at the back of a deep arch, the starry brightness of the flame which I could see through small peep-holes where the blast snouts went in. From time to time, as the iron neared its maturity, they skimmed the slag from it by a vent over the sealed tapping-hole ; and it slid out in liquid fire.

Mossop durst not leave the work, and I would not. So at dinner-hour I shared my bread and cheese with him, as I’d have

done with Will at home ; but the furnacemen gaped at us two squatting there, and furtively nudged each other, as though they'd seen something odd. Old Mossop seemed to have conceived a fancy to me by now, and instructed me : not formally, as on my uncle's order, but from plain pride in his job. " It's right furnace-weather ! " says he, as we sat snug below the kiln with the red earth miring our boots ; a moist dull day, I mind it was, and the clouds lowering. " T' blast thrives, this time o' year ; it's t' dry weather bothers us. Ye'd say damp air in t' blast was bad—but I tell thee, it's betterer ! Aye, that sounds daft ; it's like a lot o' things these modern times is learnin' us—daft but true ! "

He showed me how to test ore by licking it—if roasted right, it adhered like clay to the tongue : and a cunning trick to extend the blast, by letting slag form a nose on it : and how to break down the clinker " scaffolding " which gathered inside the furnace—but he'd let none do this but himself . . . So rapt was I, watching him a little before dusk, I missed my uncle's approach : nor knew that trouble was afoot till I heard his voice sharp behind us.

He had his back to the kiln : his clerk with him, urging some affair which seemed to displease him much, for he said curtly : " I am here, let them speak ! "

" In your office rather, sir ? " suggested the clerk. My uncle raised his voice.

" Step forward, one of you ! I'll hear what you would say." Then I saw where a dozen miners stood, not far off, with their caps in their hands. At his word they lurched towards us ; and it was now twilight enough for the gleam from the furnace-vents to illumine their sullen faces. One advanced farther than the rest, and began mumbling a confused sort of a harangue, half-defiant, half-servile : that elsewhere, in Lancashire they'd heard, their job fetched higher wages ; that they knew times was bad, but the Duke's guns had given Bigrigg a set-up, and now this new cast being made, and a hard bitter winter it had been as Mr. Fleming was 'ware, which made their work difficulter ; but the guns was grand business any road, for all knew what-like these army contracts were, no-questions-asked and damn-the-cost ; so it was right that lads who'd helped to make the guns, in mucky weather and all, shouldn't be losers ; and they asked another twopence a day. . . .

I wondered, watching Eldon's face, if he'd confess the guns

had fetched nothing : but guessed his pride would not suffer that, even if they'd believe. Nor did he mention it : but first asked quietly, did they make this request for themselves present here, or for all ? And being told that they spoke for Bigrigg generally, he turned to his clerk. " You may tear up the list of these men's names " says he, " I shan't want it——" Then addressing them : " Were this your separate grudge, I'd have turned you off without argument ; but I'll not have it said I'm so unjust to make you scapegoats for many."

" That's fair, sir " agreed their spokesman, taking heart from these words. " We nobbut think——"

" Yes, yes, I've heard what you think. Now you shall hear me. You say they earn more in Lancashire. If that be true (which I don't know) it is Lancashire's affair : not yours nor mine. You say the winter has been bad : which, though true certainly, is neither your affair nor mine nor Lancashire's, but the Almighty's. D'ye read your Bible, my friends ? " And while they gaped at him, he went on : " If so, you'll recollect that the vinedressers in the parable agreed for a set wage : who deeming others were paid better, and complaining the weather had turned sultry on 'em, asked more. But it was ruled, they were entitled to no such increase ; and neither are you."

" What, t' Bible's for Sunday ! " growled a voice.

" Sunday and every day ; so you're answered. Tell your friends if they don't like Bigrigg, there's the road to Lancashire at their door ; they can go or stop as they fancy. But hark ye——" and he stepped forward, menacing : " those that stop, work ! I'll have no time wasted grumbling. If you're for Lancashire, give in your names to Mr. Salter here and he'll disburse ye your pay ; if not, to-morrow finds you on your job and I overlook this cupidity. . . ."

I marvelled at two things. First at his harshness : not so much the words he used, for they were reasonable enough, but the cold finality of his voice ; at the great house when Barbara showed such bitter scorn for the men he employed, he'd seemed humaner ; but now I caught in his level tones the same arrogance, and perceived that he and she were a pair. And second at the men's meekness : but not so much, when I remembered Whitehaven whence he could have refilled Bigrigg three times over. They trudged away towards the gates ; for it was full dusk now, and everyone knocking off except the furnacemen

who would continue by shifts, night and day. Old Mossop had seemed to pay no heed to the dispute (likely he was used to them) but I noticed that when my uncle approached the miners, Mossop edged out to where he had their group in view, an iron crow in his hands. Now, Eldon having watched the malcontents out of sight, Mossop informed us that the first cast was fit for running.

Never shall I forget it. At Mossop's hoarse cry the paddle was stopped, the bellows ceased labouring, the roar of the blast died. Uncanny, the hush seemed, after the din and bustle that had filled our ears hour by hour. At the pig-bed or by the idle wheel, men leaned on their bars, watching; none spoke. No sound but a drip-drip of water from the sluice, and a sort of intestine muttering that the huge kiln still made, whispering to itself. In its dark arch, Mossop was picking at the vent-seal with his long crow, and seemed to make no progress; till suddenly with a fierce blinding gush the iron slid out, burst the remainder of the seal, and leapt at us in a flood.

Down the long strait foss leading to the sows it ran: not red-hot, nor white-hot even, but molten light: scorching us, far as we stood back: searing our blind eyes: hissing, stinking... at the foss-end it swerved like a live thing and flowed the length of the lowest sow, spilling into each pig. When the litter was complete, a man ran forward into the glare and thrust a long clay spade in the torrent, diverting it, so that it began to fill the next sow: and in turn, the next above that. Not till three rows of pigs were made could we bear to look steadily at their great comb of light, lacing the steamy ground: sluggish now, not moving, but abating gradually to a pale saffron tint, and thence by slow degrees into red. I glanced up, and saw the glare reflected on the undersides of the clouds that sagged over our valley. The kiln, the silent men, the great dripping wheel were tawny with its fierce brightness. And away over Keekle beck, where the ground climbs to Cleator, it lit the faces of a huddle of folk who had gathered to watch our cast made; for in all Cumberland at this time there was hardly a furnace save my uncle's in work, and his not often.

I looked round for him, but he had disappeared. At the kiln Mossop was busy about his hearth: which must be cleaned and re-sealed, and the blast turned on again, not to lose heat; then, night and day, more charges must be fed in continually till the next cast was run. I returned to find Mossop donning his

coat—from now till morning he could leave his senior foundry-man in command—and asked if he'd seen my uncle.

“What, he's gan home—he doesn't use to stop till dark, but he wantit to see t' castin'. I'll set thee Cleator way, if thou's right?”

We climbed up past the deserted mines, and were let out by the gatekeeper : I leading my horse, rather than reject Mossop's company ; but for a quarter-mile till we reached Cleator, he never opened his mouth. His cottage was endmost of a row, squat and ugly, as all were ; but I supposed his wife and him better-class, for where these hovels are mostly sluttish and foul, he'd a neat garden, and his flagged path fresh-raddled with a powdered ore which housewives get from the mines. At his gate he turned towards me : “Thou's a farmer, they say?”

I told him, yes.

“Stick till't!” he said, sombrely.

I replied, I'd no mind to give it up ; only for kindness, and the interest I took, my uncle was showing me iron.

He said, lowering his voice : “Stick till sheep, mister ! Iron's no trade for a young chap these days ; thou doesn't need showin' that?”

I said the work seemed mortal hard.

“Shaff ! Sheep's hard, aren't they ? In our brow-sweat, the Book says, we mun eddle our bread——” As we talked, the door opened and his wife stood expecting him ; the light within doors lit up his rugged face, deep-red from the day's work, and the whites of his eyes gleaming. “Our job's good, when we've got it ! Them as works thanks thy uncle and their luck, for all they'll be grummelin' ; it's t' rest, I'm flayt on !”

I was silent.

“Them as starves—thou's seen Whitehaven ? How long, O Lord, how long . . . ? I tell thee, mister, there'll be some bloody reckonin's paid, the day Cleator breaks.”

“Will it break, think you ?” I whispered.

“Maybe not——” He shook his head, dubious. And then more cheerful, turning in at his gate : “Some of t' worst troubles nivver happens, sithee ? That's a God-be-thanked job. . . .”

XXI

THE EVE of Candlemas came.

We settle scores at Candlemas, and hire lads and lasses for new-year—or did then anyhow, new-year still falling on Lady Day, seven weeks later. (They changed it soon afterwards, and subtracted eleven days from the next September, saying we'd broke step with the sun ; and a fine fuss there was, many folk grumbling that Lord Chesterfield had filched them eleven days out of their life ; but he swore he'd lengthened it.) At Yottenfews we seldom needed to look far for our labour ; for the next generation mostly slipped into their elders' shoes, with no break. But this year there were gaps.

Poor Huthwaite had left one. Will picked our cleverest for advancement to Huthwaite's place, and a half-trained lad to help him ; but young Tyson was not fully recovered, which kept us shorthanded still. "Some days, Ned's fit for nowt" confided Hannah to me, "since he come home from t' wars—sek a yigga he's picked up !" An ague, she meant ; and though Ned made light of it, I thought with Will that we should hire an extra man against lambing. So to-night very late, having paid our folk's dues here or in Calderbrig, I was figuring at my accounts and at the list for Monday's fair (Candlemas falling this year on a Sunday) when the dog Rake uncurled himself and began barking ; and I heard a knock at the back door.

Thought I : Tom Marley of Sea Cow Field—who'd missed his wages ploughing all day, and now came to seek them : or Paradise from Saint Bees ? I'd renewed our arrangement with old Tyson, stabling a cob there to replace Brigadier who now lived at Yottenfews. This cob served Tyson through the week, Paradise at week-ends ; and if he came late, Paradise used to stall the cob and enter through Hannah's kitchen, rather than grope his way to our front door in the dark. So I thought doubtless this was Paradise, Saturday being his evening. . . . Which I record, to show how subtly our procession of daily tasks, and the fresh interests Uncle Eldon was finding me with his girl and his mines, had quieted my apprehension. I feared no ill for myself nor for Yottenfews : till Hannah presently ran in to whisper me that a soldier was at the door.

While she spoke, he had followed down the passage un-

mannerly, and stood watching us"; I beckoned him, my heart sinking, and inquired what brought him here.

"I desire" says he "Mr. Eldon Fleming J.P., of Egremont. I'm told, this is where he lives?"

It was at my tongue's end to tell him he was mistaken. But just in time I remembered, that we'd agreed my uncle was to deal from Yottenfews with any threat to our peace; so I asked him to state his business. He peered at me cunningly; and I now saw that he was very drunk.

"You" says he "are not Mr. Eldon Fleming, J.P. of Egremont—you're too young. Nothing escapes me!"

"I'm his nephew" I said. "Maybe I can stand for him——" Then I saw Hannah, peeping round the stranger's arm, pull a drunk face at me and raise her elbow in dumbshow. "Will you drink something?" I asked.

He sat down very readily, and Hannah bustled away. She knew too well what sort of work was likely to have brought so unwelcome a visitor, this late hour; if we could make him talk, instead of waiting till he found my uncle to-morrow, we'd be the earlier forearmed against whatever mischief was planned. She returned with a tray on which (I saw with some curiosity) she had set not only a tankard each for us, but a jug each as well. "Now ye mun reach-till, both!" says she: and stooping, winked at me—which I better understood, when I found my jug held tea only.

Says our soldier, while she was serving him: "I am glad your uncle's out, heartily! Your good uncle, sir, is the abstemiouslest non-drinker we are like to meet, this side of the Golden Gates . . . Thankee dame, fill as full as it'll hold, I've a capacity——"

For awhile I sat back and let him ramble, drinking as oft as he invited me, toast for toast—for Hannah had guessed him shrewdly; he was not one of those who are content to enjoy their tipples alone. But he was not yet so far gone as to lose his discretion; and when I hinted that my uncle might be delayed (it was past midnight now) he replied merely, he was comfortable and pleased to make my acquaintance: and the old fly-by-night could stop out on the tiles as long as he chose.

Hannah kept our jugs filled. By one o'clock I had had more than enough, swilling at my cold tea, and was hard set to keep awake; but never before nor since have I seen any man that could put drink down like that soldier. It was ale she had

brought him, "with a stick in it," as we say : in this case, of Thornholm-milk. He was drunk from the start ; and seemed no more so, in his wits at any rate, as the night lingered on ; though his speech grew somewhat thicker. He was a cornet of dragons, he said, posted at Cockermouth, and should long since have enjoyed his captaincy but for spite ; he'd ridden from Cockermouth this same hour . . . I perceived now a weakness in him, that he'd lost count of time : and I asked where his horse was. But he said oh, the brute had no more courtesy than to knock him against low branches, so he'd turned her loose in the woods "(Many a league of woods you seem to have" he commented, "and some soup—superfluity of rivers") but it made no odds, his errand was not urgent, nor could he have delivered it in any case, since Mr. Eldon Fleming J.P. of Egremont seemed to keep very late hours ; and then he began to tell me some lewd anecdote, of which he soon lost the thread.

I contrived presently to bring him back to his errand, and asked if he'd trust that to me ; but he grew sly again, and said no sir. "In the first place" he explained—and now his eyes glazed, and I saw that he was getting fuddled at last—"it's exceedingly confidential—and I know *you're* not Mr. Eldon Egremont by the way you can drink ! And in the second place, rot me, I cannot conceive it matters a tinker's damn if my message is never delivered ; because you see sir, I am only a fish——"

I wondered, sleepily, why he should call himself a fish ; but it seemed this was not his meaning. For after hiccuping, he went on : "—Only officially concerned to tell Mr. Egremont, that our ambush is duly set : the lanes washed, to forestall warning : and in short, all done as he ordained. But why the devil, sir, should I be sent to tell him this, since he don't mean to be present ? I pause for a reply !"

What reply he wished, I don't know. I could only exclaim : "An ambush ! Of Yottenfews—— ?"

"Why no, sir ; you're plaguy stupid, hey ? I mean an ambush of the smuggler-gang whose cargo is run to-night. Whom else should we fellows ambush !"

I gasped : "Smugglers—— !"

The relief was almost more than I could bear, I'd made so sure Yottenfews was being aimed at. I could have laughed or wept, to think I'd sat up half the night with this fool on a matter which did not concern me. And then suddenly I thought—Paradise ? Last time we two were alone, I had put out some hint

about the smuggling and he grew as close as a clam : smiled at me, told me the running-trade was quite suppressed and he'd turned virtuous—from my uncle's example, he said. I'd felt then, there was something in the wind. If it were his lot being ambushed : and he there . . . ?

I dared not ask was Fleswick the dragoon's rendezvous, fuddled though my man was. "They'll be in on the flood?" I hazarded. My guest nodded.

"That's so. Flood's two hours before dawn—by heaven's will and by arrangement with your uncle, J.P."

"But where is this ambush?" I broke out—and wrecked all ; for though he had been ripe to blab, he now saw my eagerness and drew back.

"That, sir, I tell only Mr. Flegremont ! I'd not have trusted you so far as I have, but I know you're one of that ilk——" And then staring me in the eyes : "What is an ilk, do you suppose?" he asked, and slid suddenly to the floor.

I called Hannah from the kitchen ; she had dropped asleep in her chair. For long minutes we worked at him, doing whatever either of us could think, to bring him conscious. But he lay like the dead. "Sooa, let him bide" says she, "the ninny-hammer ! He's takken enough to drown six. Away to bed, Mr. Nicky ! I'll tidy him out in t' morning'——" We rolled him clear of the hearth, and shut the door on him. Once outside it, I tackled her.

"D'you know the traders are out?"

"Traders?" she blinked at me.

"Come on, now !" I whispered fiercely. "Where's this lot to be run?"

"Nay, I've heard nowt then——"

"You'd not lie to me, Hannah ? There's an ambush ! The fool blabbed as much : but not where——"

"Nay, dar zonn, I ken nowt !" she swore. "They keep sek things close, these days. Will might——"

"Will ! No one nearer?"

The old woman clung to me. "Let be now, don't mell wi' it . . . O Nicky hinny, come back !"

But I was through the kitchen, shutting the back door on her before she could stir. It was black-dark outside, with a spit of rain in the air, the moon up but never showing. It took time to find the stable-lantern and kindle it, and to saddle Brigadier.

Past two o'clock it must have been, before I was on his back ; and a rare fright for me in Calder woods at the start-off, when the dragoon's mare whinnied from the dark and sidled up to us like a boggle. But I pressed on as fast as I dared, and in something above an hour reached Thornholm.

My hammering fetched out Will in his shirt. "Odswunters, Mr. Nick!" he stared, and then fearfully: "Is it—Yottenfews?" I told him what I'd discovered. "But surely *thou's* gitten no hand in't?" he asked roughly. "Thou'd nivver be so daft——"

"Not I, but a friend maybe—never mind names! Where's this landing?"

He muttered: "Ravenglass south river—under t' Roman fort, I heard tell. Our nephew's in't, from Gosforth; he axed the lend o' six pack-ponies, and I said no, we'd trouble eneuf at Yottenfews wi'out sek mad work!"

"There's time to warn them——"

"Nay, stop out, stop out! Thou'll can do no good, it's nigh flood aw'riddy——" We both peered at his clock; the hands stood at five-and-twenty past three.

"Two hours yet!" I cried.

"Thou'd tak' longer, to Ravenglass——" He would have stayed me by force, but I slipped past him. . . . I turned once, and saw him gaunt against the candlelight as I made back for Calderbrig.

For all my haste I durst not press Brigadier too hard, and we did little more than a foot-pace; the night was ink-black, the Gosforth road a mire, and rain dimming my lantern. To leave the road would have been more risk than help, cony-holes so abounding; and I must douse my light after Gosforth, where the land falls towards Ravenglass and they could see me coming for miles if any pickets were out. At Holmrook, suspecting these, I fetched a detour; and the enclosure walls, with gates hidden the-devil-knew-where, turned me so far inland that I lost most of half an hour before I'd forded Irt and was back on the coast road; which I now followed, guessing that whether there'd been pickets in Holmrook or no, they'd watch Saltcoats ford surely. . . . And then despite my precautious cleverness, I fell into them after all.

I had bent inland again, to dodge the humpback bridge over Mite. When we were through, and I was dragging Brigadier up the loose bank, his hooves set scree rolling, and some cobbles

rattled down to the rocks. At the bridge a voice shouted . . . Dawn was not yet, but a smell of it in the air. I tugged, the cob found his feet again, and we made off up the steep brow for the shelter of Muncaster wood : where they'd not spy us.

Just then a popping of musket-shots came up from Ravenglass a mile away ; and I knew I'd arrived too late.

XXII

TO MY MIND there is ever something sinister about Ravenglass—sly, sleepy Ravenglass, with its squat cottages, its queer names over little furtive shops, its long street which ends abruptly on the beach, its harsh gulls mewling. Three streams meet there—the Irt, the Mite and the Esk : three twisty ribands whose meanders engird the place, till from their confluence at its street-end they find a gap in the dunes, and jointly enter the sea.

They are no great size, though their estuaries wind far inland. At low tide you can scarce discover water at all, but mile on mile of empty and dark sands right and left of you : and beyond these to seaward the sheltering dunes, bleached white and fringed with gray grasses ; from whose nick, opposite, shows on clear days that ancient source of tribulation and profit to our folk—the island of the Kingdom of Man.

But at flood all is altered. Then the sea marches royally along his roads, both north and south of the village ; the door stands wide ; the dunes recede out of reach ; and in Eskmouth and Irtmouth, and far up the spreading Mite, lie the three land-locked harbours whither Roman galleys once came, with their Fort guarding them whose remains are still visible—some buildings, and a great mound ; and where the sea pecks the glacis of this mound, you will find Roman tiles, and pieces of coal which I suppose they hoarded there, or a bronze penny. It was here that the traders' lugger lay ; whose masts were the first thing I saw as light grew, and I slipped down through the wood. I had tied Brigadier in a holly clump, better now without him ; for though I had no hope to warn Paradise, I thought at least I might skulk towards the fort and, if I spied him anywhere, beckon him up. I knew this ground better than he did ; on my direction (if he were still at large and I fetched him to Brigadier) he should slip the excisemen yet.

But even for this I was too late, I found when I reached the

fringe of coppice overhanging Esk shore. Below me, not a furlong off, lay the cart-track from Ravenglass to Waberthwaite ford ; along which a running fight was in progress. The excisemen, and a troop of dragoons in their iron skullcaps, seemed to have lain in wait till the traders brought all ashore ; for kegs strewed the grassy fort ; and near them beneath some trees, guarded by excisemen, a string of ponies plunged and threw up their heads as the muskets kept popping. The smugglers were now in full retreat past where I lurked, into Ravenglass : yet not so panicky but they had time to turn and shoot their pistols off, now and then. I saw none fall, either side ; only a fellow with two kegs slung over him was sent tottering, a bullet piercing his hind keg so that the spirits gushed out ; but he retrieved himself and sped on. I suppose they were making for Mite bridge (Saltcoats being now impassable) to scatter across the moor ; but at this moment came a troop of mounted dragoons, the bridge-picket doubtless, who outflanked them and turned them down into Ravenglass ; where they passed from my view, both troops converging on them now, and the shooting presently ceased. I ran down the lane. I had failed miserably in everything that I set out to do, but at least I would learn the issue.

At the top end of Ravenglass where its one street begins, a green skirts the river. Geese march there, chickens peck about, women leave clothes to bleach, and the sharpfaced gulls wheel and swoop and wrangle for whatever they can pick up. And so I found it to-day—but a man lay face-down on the wet grass with his hair bloody, and a woman gibbering over him. I ran forward to help. She screamed at me : “ Nay, thou’s had his soul, his body thou’ll nivver have ! ” And as I drew near, she snatched a pistol from the dead corpse’s belt and clicked it at me point-blank. So I ran on, perceiving that she was crazed with grief and past comforting, till I reached the foot of the street. Here on the beach a dozen smugglers, helplessly at bay, had flung down their arms. The victors were pinioning them. In a wide circle, kept by dragoons with their drawn swords, Ravenglass folk had gathered—women mostly, with children and some old men—some gaping, some abusing the dragoons, some wringing their hands ; while the chill daylight grew, and rain dripped from the dragoons’ peaked skullcaps ; and upstream the lugger left by the ebbtide was beginning to heel over.

I joined the fringe of the crowd. The prisoners were roped in line by now, ready for marching. I scanned each face, des-

perate ; Paradise was not there—nor, I thought, Rothery's sister's son, though I scarce knew him to look at. They were all local chaps, I heard afterwards, like the folk who stood by ; and soon I saw that some of these nudged each other, looking sidelong at me as though they took me for a spy of the excise-men's ; and indeed I felt near as shamed, watching those pinioned lads, as if I'd myself betrayed them. So I turned back sick, up the deserted street, to recover Brigadier and get out of this before the poor devils were marched off. On the green, as I passed, lay the dead smuggler with his woman still guarding him ; I durst not look at her face. . . .

It was gone nine before I re-entered Yottenfews. Our soldier had disappeared. Old Hannah clattered downstairs at the click of the latch, unkempt, but cackling for joy. "Now God be thanked thou's safe !" says she. "What's happen't anyway ? Nay niver mind, I'll get brakefust—ye mun forgive's a bit delay, I'm nobbut ten minutes waken. Will I call Mr. Paradise ?"

"Paradise ?" said I, staring at her. "*Paradise !* Where's he ?"

"What he's in bed, where else ? Eh, the owd rascal ! A rare turn it give me, when I looked in and saw him just now !"

I said : "I don't know what you're prating about——"

"Why, ten minutes back I waked up and, gox, says I, it's broad daylight ! I was that maisel't watchin' till t' small hours, I'd slep' in !"

"Paradise—— ?" I repeated ; but there was no damming her as she went on, tears and laughter together :

"Thinks I : Yon sodger ? But when I looked, he was gone. Then I got flayt he'd maybe fund his way upstairs and mucked one o' my clean beds. So up went I—and sure eneuf, a girt snorin' ! But when I brast in to tell him what I thought on him—oddsbreed, it wasn't his black poll at all, but a baldy-head !"

I stayed no more, but ran up three stairs at a time ; and in truth there was Paradise sleeping peacefully, and his caked riding-boots on the floor. I shook him ; he groaned, and raised his eyelids and blinked at me, and presently heaved himself up. "Breakfast, me boy—— ?" he mumbled.

"Where in the lord's name" said I "have *you* come from ?"

He stared owlshly. "Morpheus, his arms : and no thanks to you for detaching me !"

"Not from Ravenglass ?" I demanded ; and that fetched

him wide-awake. For a moment he gaped at me dumbfounded. Then softly :

“Ravenglass—what’s this about Ravenglass? You’ve been *there*?”

“Aye, have I : and sat up all night to save your neck from a string !” Which was not true ; but I was cold and soaked and famishing, and had half-feared him dead : “——And return now to find you snoring between your sheets : or between my sheets, I should say !”

He had the grace to look penitent. “O Nicky, my Nicky ! If I’d guessed you’d be warned of Ravenglass—by your uncle as I suppose ?”

And then suddenly, I saw all.

“Where was *your* cargo run ?” I whispered. He glanced towards the closed door.

“At Fleswick, I think” he murmured back. “Though why I should think it, I don’t know. Dreamed it, perhaps ? For I’ve slept all night here in Yottenfews—I pray you’ll remember that.”

“At least” said I “your dream didn’t start—or maybe it didn’t end ?—till after two in the morning ; for that was when I left here.”

“Oh, much after !” said Paradise. “And now, since dreaming is hungry work, let’s have breakfast. . . .”

I durst ask no more while Hannah was serving us—in a great way she was, scolding me for my night’s escapade, rejoicing at my return, defensive against the sly insinuations of Mr. Paradise who taxed her with entering his bedroom. But I described the visit of the drunk dragoon, in her hearing : letting her suppose (to oblige him) that I’d brought Paradise home before the dragoon arrived, and that he’d gone early to bed. “Well, well !” says Paradise. “I dreamed somewhat of a dragoon, last night. O fantastick coincidence !”

So when Hannah went out I asked him (what had been puzzling me all this while) if the dragoon and he had met in the small hours : and if so, what passed between them ? But he said nay, the fellow must have managed to regain his wits without help, and taken himself off. “For, part of my dream” says he looking down his nose “was a man belching through your woods chasing a white horse, which he apostrophised as ‘Mr. Eldon Fleming of Egremont.’ But in dreams, you know, naught seems wondrous ; so I kept mum and—in this dream of mine—let him stagger by.”

And then evading all my further efforts to question him, he began pressing me for details of the adventure at Ravenglass ; which I gave him in full. And when he had heard all, he said tenderly : "Thou'rt a scatterbrain, Nick. Did not I once tell thee, when thy Uncle Magistrate smells a cargo, his omniscience is known to us : who use our knowledge adroitly. It is the small fry who are caught—like the Jews' scapegoat, suffering beastly that the more sophisticate may survive."

"I didn't stop to think of that——"

"No, but ran hotfoot to insert thyself between their opposing musket-balls—*suasit amor facinus*—in hope of saving my carcass !"

"Let's talk no more of it. We're both whole."

He said, studying me : "What's amiss, Nick ? You're out with me ?"

"Not with you."

"Whom, then ? Come !"

My pent-up bitterness broke loose. "Here's your *method*, you brag of ! A lad slain, his woman left : a dozen taken, whom my uncle will send up to the assize to be hanged or transported : all which, your method seems to countenance, provided that you go free !"

"Why, but " he reasoned "those fellows smuggled to please themselves. We didn't oblige 'em to !"

"But your king-spy betrayed them—nay, you told me so that Fleswick night !"

"Whisht ! " says he. "Not so loud——"

"Those poor lads sailed on a gamble—that's the romance of all this running-trade, I guess : a gamble against the King—but being betrayed or ever they set out, their venture was no gamble as they supposed, but a trap !"

"Well, though" says Paradise uneasily, "assuming they were betrayed——"

"You know they were."

"It was *his* spy betrayed 'em——"

"Whom you bought !"

"Secondhand. He would have informed your uncle of Ravenglass, though we'd all stopped in our beds !"

I said : "You're too clever an arguer for me. But this you cannot deny : you earn your profit and immunity by the tribulation of Ravenglass ; and *qui facit per alium*—there's a tag damns you, from your own book ! But let's not quarrel. . . ."

I broke off, half-penitent because I saw I had pricked him, and I owed him too much love to do that. "It's not your fault nor mine, that this romantick running-trade shows so filthily!"

Paradise sighed. "This is a filthy world, me boy—as I warned you, the night that you've reminded me of: its romance filthy as the rest."

"Not all!" I murmured; for I thought suddenly of my father, whose folly had been without stain.

"All, in our trade: where we weigh profit against loss, and subtract honour out of either scale to make the balance come right; and are as resolute to undo each other as your great merchants everywhere. You'll mind I told your uncle so, here in your presence—though if any man alive has plumbed the filthiness of the running-trade, it is he!"

"I could wish you well out of it."

"Nay, I am too deep in. What's this the fellow grumbles in Shakespeare? 'Returning were as tedious as go o'er——' Yet some day, if I'm spared, I'll break with 'em. . . ."

The rain had left off soon after dawn; the sun climbed, slanting through our low windows. The wind was north, as we have it often in February, and we heard the Sabbath-bell from Beckermets. Outside a blackbird sang. We were still sitting over our breakfast-things when Will Rothery rapped and entered. Mighty grim, he looked; and I knew from the way he greeted Paradise first, he'd some bone to pick with me. "Good day, Mr. Paradise!"

"And to you, Balbus. Here's a grand morning, hey?"

"It has been!" says Will, looking very pointedly at the clock. And to me: "So ye're home, then? I was for comin' down, two hours back; but they tell't me at Calderbrig a lad had seed ye ride in . . ." Then he burst forth: "Sithee now, hasn't thou cause to think shame o' thyself, givin' us sek a fright? I tell thee, if I'd been clad to follow thee and catch thee last night, I'd have skelped thy bottom howivver!"

"Your nephew's safe" I diverted him. "At least he wasn't with the lads I saw copped——"

"I know. I'm just back from Gosforth; and I give *him* a rare good talk-to, an' all. Sek work!"

"You don't hold with smuggling, then?" put in Paradise.

"Not for our sort, I don't; least of all, these days—odd's white light, min, haven't we eneuf at Yottenfews, watchin' oursel's?"

"And yet" says Paradise "at Thornholm there is or used to be a Cow——"

"Shaff! That's different."

"I'm glad of it. I feared you must have slaughtered her; but since you've not——" He poured Will a glass, and pulled him down on a stool by us. "I'll give you a toast—in Latin, for secrecy: *Magnum bovis incrementum!* Which means, as Nick knows (he's been quoting Latin at me) good health to Thornholm's noble animal, and may she never run dry!"

Will grinned. He was less angry than relieved, finding me and his lad both back. Soon he was telling us how Dick had escaped: "When t' ambush broke, he was on t' beach un-loadin'; so he run intil t' sea and waded round behind ship. He dursn't show hissel', and afore long it got so parlish cold he thought he was gan to die; so he swum t' bay just to warm hissel'! And what with t' rain, and them all so thrang above, nobody seed him. But 'Eh, Uncle Will' says he, 'it was a cold 'un! I've run eight mile home and not warm't yet!' And says I: 'Well, let it lesson thee to keep from sek jobs—or I'll warm thee, by jiminy!'" Then turning on me, Will added: "A fine mess *we'd* have landed oursel's in, if I'd lent Dick them ponies and they'd been traced till Yottenfews——"

"Aye marry!" said Paradise. "A pretty team, Nick's ponies and thy little cow would have looked——" At which we fell chuckling, while the sun warmed us at the window-seat and the blackbird poured out his song . . .

But my thoughts kept turning to Ravenglass: a dead man face-down on the wet green, with geese staring, and the gulls wild to come at him, and a wild woman beating them off.

XXIII

NEXT DAY at hiring-fair Will Rothery and I moved slowly among the groups—shepherds and ploughmen, hostlers, labourers and all sorts—who were there offering themselves, each with a straw between his lips to show that he desired a new master. And among these stood many idle miners and foundrymen, laiting any kind of job, though there was little enough chance that a farmer would choose them. But this is the way of folk in our parts, they'll not leave the neighbourhood: rather enduring the most

harsh privation and the bitterness of deferred hope, than to renege their soil and try their fortune elsewhere.

After much survey Will professed he'd found a man to his taste—a plain blunt fellow, well spoken-of where he'd been shepherd before, and one who'd come through the small-pox : and fetched him to me. So when we had talked together, I too fancying him, we shook hands ; and I sent Will and him to wet the contract while I sought Tyson of Rottington, Ned's grandfather, whom I'd spied earlier in the crowd.

We could enjoy our crack, for he had time on his hands ; he'd brought his wife to hire a girl, and says he : “ She knows the mak' of lass she wants, but she's a terrible lengthy chooser —— ” So he was primed with the gossip of the fair, which he passed on to me. “ This job at Ravenglass ” he said “ is what they're mostly talkin' of nowt else but. And no wonder ! Eh dear, two strong lads dropped ! ”

“ Two ? ” I cried.

“ Divven't ye know ? There was John Pharaoh kill't—near t' ford, on t' dryin'-green it was, and his wife watchin'. And they fun' a second corp, late las' night ; Tom Dixon shepherd's dog fun' it.” This body had lain all yesterday in tall nettles near the Fort, not missed ; for most of Ravenglass were unloading ; and a few who escaped like Rothery's Dick remained in hiding till night. To-day the prisoners were brought up before my uncle at Egremont, for committal to the assize ; but where they'd jail them, no one knew, for Carlisle was full of Jacobites unless they'd been sent south by this. Terrible bad, things were in Carlisle, he'd heard tell : the cathedral so filthy from the rebels they'd crammed in it that the very earth below the flags was corrupt, and a small-pox now raging. And with bad harvests for two years, and prices still going up, bellies would be pinched—but worst hereabouts, with the miners and foundrymen mostly idle : and the masters so hard hit, they must leave the ore in the ground.

He told me further (lowering his voice now) that from what he could hear there was a mort of trouble brewing in Whitehaven ; and the dragoons who had been fetched for Ravenglass were not yet gone home—to Cockermouth, I think he meant—but hidden locally, in case rioting should break out.

Said I : “ You can't hide dragoons ? ”

“ Maybe ye're right. But they come in and they've not gan out agen, and that's what's bein' said howivver ! ”

When I left Tyson, and was seeking Will and our shepherd, I encountered the young man (I never learned his name) whom Eldon turned off for his accident with the sled. He was for passing me ; but I stopped him and asked what luck he'd had, and was he still resolute to try Scotland ?

"Aye" he said, "I'm not like t' most o' them, I can see this spot's fit for nowt and I'm done !"

"Tramping ?" I was in two minds to offer him a crown ; but I knew better. He'd have told me to go to hell and mind my own business. As it was, he stared at me pretty sullenly before answering :

"There's a ore-ship due out."

"Let's pledge your trip ?" said I ; and after another pause, he consented. But he would take no more than a pint. When we were done he asked me with a sort of sneer, how Bigrigg was ? I said I'd not been there much.

"Aye, Fleming of Egremont has more'n one use for thee, I suppose !" says he darkly ; and when I asked him what that meant, he was silent. Only outside the alehouse, as I bade him godspeed, he stuck his face close to mine. "Thou's wished me well" he muttered, "I've no quarrel with *thee* . . . sithee, keep out o' Cleator for a bit ; and don't say I tell't thee !" And he slipped away through the crowd.

But I was due there already. At Bigrigg a Sabbath quiet lay on the place ; which perplexed me till I recalled that, when I'd come previously, I found men hoping outside for jobs : but to-day no one. The gates were closed, except a wicket. As I stepped through, the keeper looked sharply at me : then recognising me, undid one gate for Brigadier. I inquired for my uncle, and was told he had not yet returned from the court house. Work was going forward with less talk (I fancied) and the men's faces looked grim. I listened for the hammer ; but its wheel was at rest when I reached Keekle bottom, and its furnace unkindled. I found Mossop at the other hearth : the wheel here working for the bellows, and the charges being fed in. "You're not forging yet, then ?"

"Seems not" says he.

"I'd thought to find you at it, by this !"

"Aye ? Well, thy uncle's orders is to finish off t' castin' first ; we'll save wages so, he reckons." He said no more. Surly and close, he seemed to-day : and the men likewise,

moving dourly about their jobs and casting us furtive looks. I told him presently, I had supposed my uncle must have taken on a good few extra hands for the forging, when I saw none idle outside.

"Thou'd see plenty in Whitehaven."

"Aye, more's the pity——"

He shrugged. "Eh well, there'll be a dozen fewer mouths to feed in this nebberhood, from to-day——" And when he saw I missed his meaning, he added: "They'll can tell thee why, down at t' court house!"

I scarcely knew what to make of him. The sullen humour of the ironfolk was something to which I was growing hardened, by now; but old Mossop had used me friendly. So I forbore to show I'd noticed any change in his manner, and began to inquire about the forging: how we'd save wages by postponing it, and would it not bring more work? He replied curtly once or twice; then turned to face me (which he had not before) and rapped out: "Thou's a gey lot o' questions t' ax, young feller!"

I lost patience.

"Aye? Here's another, then! I've been warned to stop away from Bigrigg. Why?"

"Who by?" says he.

"Never mind who by. What's the trouble?"

He replied, now less sharply: "I tell't thee as much, a week back eh? I thought thou'd takken t' hint."

I said, I didn't hold with hints, I was for plain speaking.

"Then thou'd best tell what was said?"

"Some riddle about my uncle having more than one use for me, up here——"

"Or down at Ravenglass, eh?"

"Ravenglass——!" I stared. "Who said I'd been at Ravenglass?"

He looked me straight in the eye. "Maybe, t' same chaps as says thy uncle keeps hissel' inform't o' what's bein' whispered in Bigrigg!" And the surprise of that took my breath.

"So I'm his spy, eh? Well, they're liars whoever said it, you can tell them from me!"

Old Mossop laughed harshly. "What, I've tell't 'em aw'riddy! Yon lad's clean at least, says I. If he's clean, says they, what the dangment is he at, here an' in Ravenglass? Nay, says I, ax him! I'll not credit sek tales——"

I broke in : " What I was doing at Ravenglass is my affair, not theirs nor my uncle's ! What I'm doing here is to pick up some knowledge of their damned trade—but I'm cured of it ! You'll not see me no more. . . . "

I was still fit to cry with shame and rage, starting homeward. Just out of Egremont, a quarter-mile past the bridge, I turned in at my uncle's stone gateposts ; for I should know no peace till I could have this business out with him, and tell him his irontrade was not for me and I was going to stick to my sheep. But when I rounded the great house I heard my name called, and saw Barbara wave from the terrace.

She was alone, hatless, beside the balustrade with its big ugly nymphs now gaunt against the late sky. From here a croft sloped towards the river, where I knew she was wont to ride ; and as I reached the terrace edge, I could see two lads finishing a brush-hurdle for jumping. She moved to meet me ; and before I could slip from Brigadier : " You've missed my father ? " she said.

" Aye, if he's at Bigrigg—— "

" Bigrigg ! La no, he was in court till three ; then sent me word he must ride down to Yottensews to seek *you*—O Nick, is this a true report that you've turned smuggler ? " And without waiting for an answer, her eyes sparkling mischievously, she went on : " My father's in a fine way ! Late last night some one brought him word that you'd been seen at the landing ; and he's perplexed to learn if you were there as one of his myrmidons, or of t' other party—but I said, t' other, doubtless ! For how else possibly could you have known the smugglers were due, his secret being so well kept ? You'll hang, Nick ! You'd best fly—— "

" In heaven's name ! " said I, for I was little enough inclined for jesting just then, " what's all this fuss about Ravenglass ? I was there—as half Cumberland seems to know ! But on other business—— "

" Well, at least " she mocked, " you weren't caught, which is all that matters ; for now you can give me some expert advice about these jumps I'm having built ! " She picked up her habit and ran down the slope from the terrace ; and I followed, leading Brigadier.

From Egremont bridge the river fetched a great circuit, bounding my uncle's park. The lower gap gave towards the

sea : now dim, with a pale-tawny gash in the clouds over it where the sun sloped to setting. Northwest beyond the other loop of the river lay Egremont, huddled at its bridge-head. The wind had dropped, the evening was very mild and still, waiting for rain. As we walked down the croft a sound came faint to our ears. "What's that?" I wondered. And says she : "Shot-firing, at Bigrigg—we can hear 'em, in this weather." But to me it seemed different. When miners fire a blast, it makes a thud like a beam falling : but this, ragged and sharp . . . Barbara beckoned the two lads to give over now, since it grew late ; they had been plaiting little fences of whinbush and staking them in the ground. We two stopped to inspect ; and I asked what word sent my uncle to Yottenfews, wondering in secret if his drunk dragoon had remembered how much he'd blabbed. But my uncle, it seemed, had heard of me at Ravenglass from another source ; an exciseman knew me.

"You see" she said smiling, but with a sort of under-malice which troubled me, "you have a most unhappy knack of bringing my father to a *non plus*, when he most wishes you well. Now, I'm your friend in a fashion——"

"I wish I knew it."

"You know so little about women, you must take my word for that. Had you shown more amenable in December—the day we met here, I mean—I'd have advised you not to grudge your old trees !"

"They're his, when he wants them. I'm very sensible of what he has since done——"

"La, yes ! I don't sympathise. But there's no doubt he's eager to stand fairy-godfather to your sheep : and as eager (the lord knows why) to coax you into iron."

"That's something he'll never do !" I cried : and told her indignantly, I was as good as charged with being his spy at Bigrigg, and at Ravenglass too.

"Foh !" she scoffed. "Much their gossip counts ! If we took heed of all they say about us in Cleator—can't you see it's your rank of gentleman they vent spite against, and not you ?"

"I'm finished, anyway."

"My father's view is what matters. He knows they lie ; I suspect though, he's less sure about Ravenglass—nay, I'm serious ! He finds it odd you should have been in Ravenglass, by mere chance."

"What's he said to you ?"

“What he says normally about his affairs : I mean, nothing ! And I suppose that’s all you will tell me either, when my father and you have met.” She looked at me curiously. “You’re close, Nick, for all your simplicity ; yet you blundered, to talk so cheerfully about the brandy-trade t’ other evening. This last cargo was brandy : which of course——” and she pulled a solemn face——“makes the crime worse !”

“I blundered, say you ? It was you and Paradise ran that hare !”

“Oh” she vowed, “I am fathoms-deep in love with your absurd Mr. Paradise, I’ll not hear him blamed ! If he were eighty years younger . . . and Nick, here’s something else for you to learn about women : let a girl find a lover with your body (able and young, I mean, she’d forgive you your looks !) and with a wit as sharp as that old ruffian of yours, he could do what he liked with her ! I believe you were jealous of him that night, for you’d got rid of him before breakfast. Does he haunt Yottenfews ? I’ll come more !”

“You’re welcome any time” said I as carelessly as I might, “whichever you come to visit. And I’d give him your message, but I doubt it would scare him off !”

“Then don’t, for your sake. For oh, Nick, your fellowship with that old rogue is the best thing I’ve yet found in you ! He’ll entice you off the strait path—which is what you most need, believe me. He’ll learn you to drink and swear at least.”

“I can learn myself that, if I want to.”

“But you don’t want” she pouted. “O la, I’d admire to see you tipsy, just once ! We Flemings are damnably virtuous—my father in his way, you in yours : and myself, hey !” she sighed, “myself perforce, for lack of opportunity or temptation !”

So we stayed dallying : my cousin, I think, without a care in the world unless it were to torment me : Brigadier grazing, with his rein slipped over my arm : and I in tumult, tugged by her presence close to me in the quiet dusk, knowing my talk boorish yet too little master of myself to fall in with her gay humour—and still no nearer to discovering how far her mockery was friendly, how far contemptuous : nor what she truly thought of myself.

XXIV

THE TAWNY streak above the horizon faded ; sky and sea grayed into one. Across at Egremont a window or two lit up, and the last rooks were trailing towards Saint Bees as we regained the terrace. From somewhere behind the house, where the drive curved down from the road, a thud of cantering hooves reached our ears. My uncle, thought I, from Yottenfews : and wondered what he would say.

But the rider had turned into the stable-yard, for he did not appear. Almost at once, however, the front door sprang open ; a man's figure showed against the lighted hall and ran out into the dusk. He stood peering, spied us at the terrace-edge, and plunged towards us. It was my uncle's surly butler, as I now saw : his dignity all collapsed, his cheeks ashen. " O miss, miss, the mines—— ! " he gasped out.

" Well ? What's wrong there, man ? Control yourself."

" O miss, the ruffians—— ! " He seemed crazy with fear. While he stood gibbering, we trying to hector some sense out of him, the remaining servants vomited from the porch in a flood and made towards us, waving their arms.

Soon their tale tumbled out. Less than an hour back, not long after I left the works, a great horde from Whitehaven had arrived there, armed with cudgels and stones. The gatekeeper barred them ; but they'd foreseen this, likely, for they brought a fir-trunk along with them, with which they ran at the gate. Then down the road and over Keekle bridge a cloud of soldiers came galloping—the dragoons, lately back from Ravenglass : whose return march had been delayed (it seemed) and their day spent at bivouac in Nook spinney above Cleator ; it being suspected that a riot might break when the smugglers' committal was known, and the court house get mobbed. The dragoons reached Bigrigg as the gate began to give way : dismounted, and first fired over the crowd's heads (this was the noise we'd heard as we stood in the croft, but mistook it for blasting.) Then, the mob finding they'd no hurt and turning on the dragoons, these drew sabres and rode at them, cutting a path till they had reached the gate and secured it against destruction. Whereat both sides reached a check ; for the dragoons were not in force

to disperse such a multitude, nor those so hardy to press on and carry the gate, ill-armed as they were.

It was at this point that a footman of my uncle's rode up with some message, thinking to find him at Bigrigg. He observed the tumult from a distance and, joining the crowd of watchers, saw a detachment of the rioters break off towards Egremont, shouting that they would wreck Fleming's house. He turned, spurred back at his top speed, and warned the butler and his fearful staff that the ruffians were close behind him.

Now they pressed round us, urging Barbara to escape : and none more abject than the butler who should have exercised his authority over them, but who showed quite demented. "O miss!" he wailed. "You'll be raped here where you are standing, and your papa will blame me——"

"You're a fool, Gregg" she told him, "and indecent. Get back inside, all of you; the place is strong and we'll hold it. Gregg, the gun-room key——"

But he stood quaking. "Hold it? They'll pull the house to hell and us cooped in it!" And when I bade him be silent, angered that he should speak so to her: "Will *you* repulse them then?" he snarled. "If so, you'd best begin, for——"

Suddenly a lass screeched: "O lard save us, they're here!" And the whole pack bolted like sheep.

We stared towards Egremont. Down in the bottom of the croft, three hundred yards away, little figures swarmed into view. "They've broke the gate" she said quietly. There was a cart-track round the croft, by the riverbank, with a gate on the main road close to Egremont bridge which was kept locked. Some had burst in here. We could hear others yelling up the road, making for the main entrance. "Come!" I cried. She looked at me scornfully.

"Not I. My place is here" says she, as the mob raced up the hillside; but I was mounted, and had lifted her in front of me, before she had time to move. "My job's to look after you!" I said.

No servants were to be seen. They had run for the main gate, beating the road-mob by seconds, and fled away up the fell. I wheeled Brigadier, and struck off across the park. The terrace was flanked by yew-trees, which partly screened us from the rioters as their vanguard arrived there. I could see through the gaps their numbers increasing on the terrace, and a great many surging through the lit doorway into the house—but I'd

no leisure to peer at them ; for my lady twisted and writhed, calling me coward-brute and demanding to be set down ; and once at least, I paying no heed, she sank her teeth in my hand. By now we were off the croft, among elm-trees : worse going still, with boughs to dodge and Brigadier to guide, and the mowdiwarps' hummocks everywhere. But at least the yells came no closer.

The park-fence ran down from the road to the river, a furlong south of the house ; even in this dusk (hoped I) we might chance on a gate through it, and maybe she'd have the key. But she cried suddenly : " Ware, you fool ! Ware ! " And I reined, just in time. Short of the fence, my uncle's Frenchman had dug what they call a haw-haw—a deep dry moat, with walled sides : which I still reckon one of the most daft ideas ever fetched into England. We'd have been down it, neck and crop, but for her warning. " Where's a gate ? " I jerked out.

She was quiet now, scared by the awesome pandemonium which had broken out behind. But finding me at a loss, she reviled me : " You oaf, there's none ! D'ye think I lug the keys of all the estate in my pocket ? "

" Then it's the river " said I.

We turned downhill through trees. At the cart-track these ended. There was a gate, but locked : and no help to be had from her. As we reached it we must have showed against the valley-mouth to some of those on the terrace ; for a fiendish shouting came after us, and I saw a pack of them start to run, I drove for the river.

The fence projected, for privacy (as we build cattle-rails) and soon Brigadier lost his feet. I slipped off, leaving him carry her, till the stream washed all three of us past the fence-end and the wise beast scrambled towards shore. At knee-deep, before my lady had recovered from her fright, I was up again, fearing she'd yet elude me ; but she lay still enough now. So we climbed slantwise to strike the road, where it skirts round a low fell three miles from Calderbrig. And there at last, in a small wood that hangs beneath the lip of the road, I released her.

It was near dark outside and black as ink in the wood. The mob could never find us here, even if they attempted : which was unlikely, for we heard them triumphing, very clear. By day the house was visible in all its ugliness from this spot ; now night hid what was happening there, but the din told its own

tale. Drunken shouts reached us, fierce exultant yells, and the smashing of windows. On all floors lights appeared, as the mob found its way from room to room; and at short intervals, continually, some fellow blew a hunting-horn which was hailed with great bursts of laughter. "Oh, God!" I heard Barbara mutter between her teeth. "They shall pay, they shall pay!" Then she turned on me. "These are your *comrades*, Master Humanitarian! Our same stock—d'you still think? If they'd done this to Yottenfews——"

"At least thank God you're safe!" said I.

"Aye, I'm safe—and you're safe, and down there those brutes triumph!"

"I triumph here!" I gasped out. A madness got hold of me. I caught her close in the black wood. I covered her face with kisses.

"Ah!" she screamed. "Do you dare, indeed?" And struck me stingingly on the cheek.

"I love you. I'll dare more——" And then madlier, I was laughing. For I'd done with uncertainties; I'd loved her, and hated her, and still hung back; but now I had kissed her and she lay in my arms, and what should come next I cared not. "I'll dare more than this——"

"You dared not stand with me at the house!" says she: but faintly now, and not struggling. By and by I felt her fumble at my coat in the dark. "Foh!" she sighed, "you're all draggled——" and suddenly, nestling to me wetness or no, she was in a passion of tears. . . .

How long we stayed thus, I don't know. At the house their vile din kept on, the horn yelping at intervals: and beside this no other sound on earth but the pat-pat of old Eb Huthwaite's flail—I'd seen him as we crept up, in his barn close below the wood, at work by lamplight between open doors where the draught winnowed his threshing; for he was too stone-deaf to hear anything, though all Egremont were being sacked. Then we caught hoof-beats; we turned our heads, and soon across the brow from Calderbrig came the wink of a lantern.

Right opposite us, where the house first appeared, two horsemen pulled up, and we heard them exclaim sharply. One leaned forward, peering, so that his pale face showed in the light from his saddle-bow. "Father——!" she cried.

We ran out. He'd been at Yottenfews for me, when his clerk sent word that a mob was marching on Bigrigg, and that

he'd summoned the dragoons who (by Eldon's ordinance) were reserved in case the court were attacked. Eldon spurred back : nor had no warning what was happening at home, till he saw with his own eyes. "But the dragoons——?" he cried. And we were telling him that the dragoons had work enough to save Bigrigg, when suddenly he called out : "Oh heavens, see that——!"

He pointed. At the house, even while we stared, the lighted windows showed ruddier, and flames began to lick out. In the glare many figures could be seen bolting on to the terrace, where they swayed back in a still-widening ring as the flames gathered strength. The horn yelped, exultant. "O sir, shall we ride down?" said the man who had fetched my uncle. "It is useless now" he replied.

He dismounted by Barbara. "How did you come here, child?"

"Nick made me" says she.

"You are soaked."

"My skirt only. Nick's wet through, Nick brought me—oh, father!"

"Naught else matters" he said.

Now smoke grew on the damp air, sagging across the park to us in a broad plume whose belly the flames illumined. Old Eb's flail ceased; he'd smelt burning—we could smell it presently—and stood beneath us at his door, staring aghast. I was cold, wringing wet, and filled with a great horror; but I could not have wrenched myself from that spot for the world. The windows spewed flames which ran up wavering to the balustrade of the roof. Sometimes a blast of sparks gushed out, as ceilings began falling: we heard them go. Then an oblong of wall (the gun-room, where several kegs of powder were stored) disappeared blindingly; and a few seconds afterwards the explosion thudded our ears. But the most awful sight gave no warning, when the roof vanished whole into the blazing shell; for a moment the flames were smothered, then leaped skyhigh in a great pillar of light as the roar of that fall reached us. And all this while the encircling raiders gloated and rejoiced at their deed, now with linked arms, swaying drunkenly: their clothes blood-red in the glare, their massed faces lurid, the ceiling of tawny smoke overhead. And the horn blew.

I stole a glance at my uncle. He stood stiff, expressionless, his face and hands showing pale. His man kept speaking to the

horses, who fidgeted, their ears flickering. We thought the fire must surely give some sign of burning itself out, but it still spread ; we could see through a lattice of black trees the stables now blazing. Barbara wept : " Oh, the horses ! The five horses, all chained——"

Suddenly Eldon spoke. " There are others, however ! " And his voice rang confident, as though he spied something he was waiting for ; then we saw what it was. Round the far angle of the house swept a sudden glitter of steel caps and accoutrements. " The dragoons ! " I gasped.

And I heard Barbara : " Ah, kill—kill ! "

This time the dragoons gave no warning. We saw them stream across the terrace ; in a moment their horses were amongst the crowd ; and I think some of these, their eyes dazed with staring at that furnace, can have guessed nothing of the peril that surged at them before they were hacked down. Now the cheers died and screams of terror rose as they scattered this way or that : the dragoons' horses plunging, swerving, seeming to pounce ruthlessly on the darting figures that fled them. One hard-pressed wretch I saw rush headlong towards the house and vanish through a bright doorway, not to return. The terrace emptied ; but far down the croft and by the riverside the shrieks of the pursued still rang out. After a long while, half an hour or more, a trumpet blew and the dragoons began to ride back to the light of the fire, some dragging prisoners ; but there were many rioters beyond reach of capture now, crumpled on the scorched grass ; who stirred not, even when the horses stepped close by them. " So ! " says my uncle in his calm voice. " They have it ! "

" Will we go down, sir ? " his man asked.

" No. To-morrow will be time enough, they won't spoil by keeping—not those for whom I shall make myself responsible " was his grim reply.

He turned to us. " You are cold, I must get you shelter."

" O sir, where ? " Barbara sobbed.

My arm supported her. " You shall come home to Yottenfews, and bide there for the present ! " I said to them.

What else could I say . . . ?

PART THREE

Cartmel

XXV

SO I FETCHED Barbara home.

The events following that wild night, I must tell briefly. For I see, thinking back, that the next twelve weeks formed an interim. The seeds were sown in the days which I have recounted. Now they lay hidden, their growth not seen nor hardly guessed : till the harvest, suddenly, was at hand. . . .

What most concerned me welcoming my kinsfolk to Yottenfews, was to learn how they'd be received. No use to talk with Will Rothery. I knew his opinion of my uncle ; and I knew him. If I said naught his loyalty would keep silence ; if I spoke, he would tell me plain that I was daft to admit the old fox—as maybe I was, but the whole business seemed a tanglement which I lacked wit to unravel. On the one hand I durst not hope the danger to Yottenfews was averted ; when our hour struck, my uncle's help would gain authority from his seeming to hold the place ; further, he'd helped already, and for this cause alone I could not grudge him my roof. On the other, two human parties were to be reckoned with : my guests, and the folk who served me. Say Hannah rebelled : or say (which seemed no less likely) my guests found Yottenfews' service rough, after their grand mansion ? I had weighed both sides before making my choice. After all, reason prompted it ; and if sensibility contradicted—if Hannah were not to be cajoled, nor the guests satisfied—well, they need bide no longer than it took to find other shelter. Still there is no denying, it was my desire for Barbara dipped the scale.

And indeed at first all went smoothly. Old Hannah was touched by Barbara's plight (I had to lift her down and carry her into my house, like a bride) and our folk shared her anger at the infamy which had happened. If Eldon Fleming was disliked, the quarrel was none of theirs ; but the act of destruction outraged all, and especially the horses' wretched fate, which none but a mob of miner-savages (they swore) would have

allowed. Meanwhile next morning Hannah's pity grew into wonderment, when my lady discovered no trace either of fatigue or of tears ; and I too, remembering her storm of grief at the wood, admired how much she showed herself her father's child in this fortitude, exploring Yottenfews in my company, picking her dainty way through our waste-ground, and having me show her everything, like one without care : while my uncle rode off to Bigrigg as unconcerned (you would have said) as from his own doorstep. I think both Hannah and myself first feared that such control was unnatural : that they had nerved themselves beyond human strength and must crack. But they did not. All this week Barbara read, walked by Calderside, rode over Seascale downs, and even teased me a little. Her father followed his routine at the works, and lost not an hour. Even Will Rothery seemed impressed. " Yon chap's got guts in him ! " he admitted.

The guests' valeting was a problem ; for we lived plain and simple, and I doubted if Hannah would consent to have strange servants brought in. But here too we found a way ; Eldon arranged with me to hire a young decent girl out of Calderbrig, to attend Barbara and help Hannah as she was bid ; and the old woman, between unwillingness to have our guests find us rude, and the sharp joy she took in teaching this new lass her jobs, remained happy. My uncle, I think, was sensible of the un wisdom of making changes ; for his own servant lodged at Gosforth, and was there more to furnish him an escort to Bigrigg than for any work he need do.

This first week too, the ruffians caught by the dragoons were brought up before our justices and committed for next September. And a rare bloody assize it promised to be : four hundred Jacobites, and the smugglers from Ravenglass, and now our rioters. From the committal of these last, my uncle held aloof : protesting drily, it were hardly suitable that he should sit that morning, seeing whose house had been burned (but Will growled, no doubt his influence would weigh when the punishments were allotted.) Paradise showed me, one day when I called at Saint Bees, a London newspaper with an account of the riot, and with some comment on the iniquity of my uncle's being victimised : this Mr. Fleming (it observed) having displayed a most conspicuous loyalty in the Scots trouble, and deserving well of his country ; besides which patriotic merit (it said) he was a gentleman known locally for good works, church-building, *et cætera*, and for enforcement of some decencies which his neigh-

bourhood seemed to lack ; and had lately assumed, despite his manifold affairs, the onerous guardianship of a kinsman's estate till the young heir came of age. "So you see, even in these graceless times" says Paradise, "*magna est veritas et praevalebit !* The man's virtues are patent. . . ."

Our county news-sheets gave less : offering no comment, but reporting merely how the rioters attacked both the mines and the house ; how they had fared (it seemed that nine were killed outright, or died afterwards) and how, though Eldon Fleming's home was lost, Bigrigg worked on. What was being said in Whitehaven and Cleator I did not learn : having no business there, nor any inclination to ask, in view of Mossop's disclosure. My uncle rode daily to Bigrigg with his man, a pistol each in their holsters ; and when Barbara demurred, assured her confidently that he'd nothing to fear, the scoundrels had learned their lesson—which I dare say was true, for he never took any hurt. Meanwhile at Yottenfews we ran no risk of such an attack, partly for our remoteness, but more because no mob of ironfolk would have dared trespass where my father's memory was so loved.

I rode with Barbara and Eldon to view the house, some days later. We should have gone at once, had there been any hope to save anything ; but the place was quite gutted. "Nothing left to fetch away !" moaned Mr. Salter who made haste to wait on us the next morning. "The dragoons busy against the mob, the fire was nobody's concern and was let burn itself out——" And I could not but think, had Yottenfews been ablaze, how our folk would have toiled for it . . .

The walls stood : but a mere shell, with sky above, and a huge heap of blackened and sour-smelling debris below, which choked the cellars and was piled high enough to spill through the ground windows. I had disliked this place ; yet it hurt to reflect, that beneath its charred mound lay lovely and precious things, the silver dolphins for example, fused out of knowledge : and that the mound itself was the remains and sediment of more loveliness—of silks and tapestries, of the dark-shining table tops, oak stairs, and ceiling painted by such delicate art with the Cyclops and scared Greeks. "Salter was right" observed my uncle presently in his chill voice. "This wreck is not worth our visit."

Outside for a wide distance trees were scorched and the evergreen shrubs withered : the lawns trampled muddy : the

balustrade overthrown : and the nymphs levered from their pedestals, all blackened, and some short of their heads. As we passed down the croft—for my uncle was riding on into Egremont—I spied something gleaming ; it was a hunting-horn stamped flat by horses' hooves, with a smear of blood in the bell.

That week too, I called on Pardshaw. He had arranged the transfer of our money to me (or rather, to Eldon Fleming's guardianship) when my father's death was assured. Now kindly greeting me, he spent some time instructing me how the account stood. It was as I'd expected : no great inheritance, yet ample to carry us till this year's clip should be sold. Our business done, we walked in his walled close where primrose starred the turf and a flame of crocus was breaking. He asked how my uncle did ; they were acquainted though not intimate, for my uncle disliked his sect.

I said we saw little of him at Yottenfews ; his life was in Bigrigg wholly ; of the burnt house he had already ceased to speak, as though he'd wiped it from his mind like a bad debt better forgotten.

"Yea, that's likely" says Pardshaw. "There are two ways to own a house—as home, or as property : the latter his. He may see no cause to fret."

"What ! D'you mean it's insured beyond its value ?" I asked. I had heard tell of such a trick, but not connected it with this instance. Old Pardshaw blinked.

"Nay, friend, that's more than I can say, not enjoying his confidence——" And after a pause he added : "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away : but often giveth more abundantly, to men so expert." Which notion took me so aback, I forgot to ask after Faith . . . and this was unmannerly ; for we had met and spoken more than once in Egremont since our acquaintance, and I found her friendly and kind.

XXVI

THOSE first days I gave mostly to Barbara, showing her our life, and seizing any means to awaken her interest. For I recalled how in my own adversity good friends had kept me employed : and how much I'd owed them. Animals delighted her, and especially our troop of shaggy pack-ponies browsing Calderside,

idle till summer. She asked for lambs : " At Tunbridge we'd have them, now——" she said ; and was surprised to learn there'd be none here before mid-April, when the danger of snow passed. We grew into comradeship . . . only of love I durst say no more to her at present. My senses burned, when I remembered how I'd held her close and kissed her in the black wood ; I wondered, did she remember it as often, and with what sentiment ? She gave no sign ; and I kept silence, partly to avoid reminding her of the fearfulness of that night, partly in shame at having snatched my advantage then (though I could not wish it unsnatched) but mostly in hope that, now she was come miraculously to Yottenfews, I might with patience win her to love both it and me.

Sometimes my hope flourished. She teased me—and I was glad of it, for her wild grief had hurt me more than any unkindness could—but not with the old scorn ; she picked no quarrel ; and (as I judged) displayed nobility in accepting our rough ways. She declared herself altogether content at Yottenfews, won Hannah's heart, and had the little lass from Calderbrig enthralled to her with a devotion touching to see. What most surprised her was the continuity of our labours. I have said I gave those first days to her ; but the farm-work could not be left ; and as time passed and she found me as busy as her father himself, she professed laughingly she'd misjudged us. " I'd thought, a farmer's life was to hang pensive on the gate watching his sheep's wool grow ; but now learn different. You all slave—except me and the ponies ! "

" They'll make up for that, by and by."

" But I want occupation. Take me abroad, show me what you do in your hills from dawn to dark—or I'll believe with Mr. Paradise, you creep off to some Arcadian nook and lie fluting ! "

" What, in this weather——' ! "

" Foh, what's weather to you ? At school they smoked me, Cumbrians were inured to snow and rain all year round ! "

" Well " said I, " this week-end looks none so bad. Tomorrow we fetch down our ewes, and on Saturday you shall see their first-sulphuring. I expect Paradise."

She clapped her hands. " O lud, that settles it ! If your preposterous Mr. Paradise is there, I'll make one ! "

Next morning I breakfasted alone and by candlelight, for I must be all day on the fell. I had just saddled Brigadier, in a

gray sunrise, when I heard my name called and she ran out of the house. "Good-morrow, Valentine!" says she. "You're mine, remember!"

I had clean forgotten the date; for the sly saint meant nothing to me, till now. And between this forgetfulness, and not expecting her so early, I could only stammer and blush. On Valentine's Day (as you may know) a maid can claim the first lad she meets outdoors as her prisoner, till he redeem himself with some gift. "B-r-r! A skin coat, I'll have!" she shivered, for the morning was nipping cold; then she ran back into the house, and left me meditating all the pretty things I might have replied, had I been smarter . . . But towards dusk, when I returned, I'd my lady's forfeit in hand.

We had a cob at grass just then, who should have been sold shortly; and it seemed to me as I brought the sheep down Kinniside, still thinking of Barbara, that here was the very gift; for her own perished in the fire, and I knew she grieved secretly. So I asked Hannah to call her. And when she appeared: "See, I'm redeemed!" said I. "Here's your skin coat, with a friend in."

She gazed at him and then at me, and then at the cob again; and for once she had no pert answer. "O Nick! O Nick, the pretty creature!" she cried. "Can he truly be for me?" I passed her the rein, and our hands touched.

"Maybe he'll help you to forget——?" She looked up at me silently; and her eyes were starry with tears. . . .

But next day she was all mirth, when I brought round the cob for her to mount and we set off up Calder. My uncle had left already; he was out Saturday and every day, and we seldom saw him till dusk. But Paradise rode with us, being here for his week-end; and when he praised the cob, and was informed how Barbara had made me her Valentine, he exclaimed:

"Odso, miss, the almanack has tricked both of us! If the fourteenth had fallen on a Saturday, you might have had *me*——"

"What! As my Valentine—or as a horse, do you mean?" she asked solemnly. "I'm contented with Nick."

"Aye, you green girls lack judgment. Young Helen could have had Ulysses himself, or stuck to King Menelaus: but must needs waste herself on a sheep-farmer!"

"I shall not waste myself" she vowed—a little sharply, as

though this had pleased her less well. But Paradise only laughed at her.

"I'll wager not—and anyhow must yield you the argument ; for Helen buttered both sides of her bread, in the end ; and so do most of you. . . ."

At Thornholm we found the in-land dense with sheep, and Will and his lads busy. I left Paradise with Barbara—for he would entertain her—put off my coat, and joined Will. "I've brought my cousin to inspect us, Will" said I presently as we laboured. "Aye" says he, "I see ye have——" and began telling me of the new shepherd, who he said shaped well. By and by I removed to where this new man was, and worked with him for awhile, since we were barely acquainted. The day was sunny and without wind ; our job went merrily. Soon after noon, when we gave over for dinner, I returned to my guests. My lady unpacked our basket ; and sitting snug beneath the lee of a wall, we could pic-nic outdoors. "But what's this sulphuring ?" she demanded. "I've asked Mr. Paradise ; and oh, says he learnedly, 'tis a leechcraft we work on sheep. But why, Nick ? I vow, I'm all curiosity——" So I told her, we did it to discourage the "wick," or maggot-fly, which was our greatest pest. She turned on Paradise. "There, now !" says she. "You did not know even that !" And the old rogue smiled at her.

"My hard-won intimacy with your sex" he assured her "was not learned among sheep——"

"Tell me more, Nick !" she cried.

So I explained, these wicks throve best in thundery summer weather when the bracken stood high. Some thought, bracken nurtured them ; for a brackeny fell was the worst. Others, that bracken kept the fleeces wet, and a wet fleece bred wicks. Either way, bracken was our foe ; for wick'd sheep skulked in it——

"The wicked walk on every side" put in Paradise. "That's in the Psalms—King David, you'll recall, was a sheep-master." But she bade him be quiet, and entreated me to go on.

I told her, that sheep affected thus made off into deep bracken, and skulked there, not stirring almost until you trod on them, and were soon eaten alive ; and what the poor brutes endured, unless found presently, their Creator alone knew.

"Rot you, you've made me itch !" says Paradise, peering round him. "Is there bracken hereabouts ?"

"Why don't you scythe your bracken, then ?" asked my lady.

I told her it grew too fast ; but Will was hatching some new plan to diminish it, this next spring.

"Here's your chance for some pastoral fluting !" Paradise suggested. "If you could bewitch the stuff down to Whitehaven, as Orpheus his trees——"

Meanwhile we did our best by firing its dead wrack in November, and by sulphuring our sheep. Most masters dagged them in the spring, and sulphured them in the summer (dagging is cleaning their hind-parts, where the fly strikes them). But Will held dagging no cure. Far better sulphur them, he swore, both early and late ; it meant more work, but repaid us. Paradise nodded.

"He's a good husbandman, you see " he commented ; "he burns his wick at both ends. . . ."

Towards tea-time, when we had handled all that we could manage to-day, a lad took charge of them, and with three dogs began to set them up Worm Gill again to their heaf : slowly and patiently, because in two months most of them would be lambing. I'd supposed Barbara would tire by this ; but she stayed happy and, when I returned to her and Paradise, asked more questions : what other maladies had these long-suffering beasts, and how cured ? I told her of souted sheep, who lose flesh, eating a rank kind of grass on the higher fells, and must recruit their health in low pasture ; and of the liver-snail which they devour with sodden grass, and by which their own guts are devoured. She marvelled that any throve ; but I explained, these various evils did not strike at us all at once. Cold rainy summers helped the snail, but disheartened the wicks ; so that (though farmers were aye grumbling) it seemed to me there was a sort of Providence in our affairs, that we lost not too much together. Only marshland was always bad, for it caused foot-rot ; and from this we were fairly free. I mind too, I taught her the old numerals—yan, tyan, tethera and the rest—which we used for sheep-counting ; she said them after me, laughing at their outlandish names, till she'd some twenty by heart.

By and by Will came ; he had held aloof all this while. I made her known to him, and he greeted her very civilly. Then he informed me : "We've a sturdy to burn, yet."

"Sturdy ? " asked Barbara.

So I said, I'd missed one sheep-malady : which was a clot that grew between the brain and the skull, and had to be scared out. "Show me !" says she ; and on Will doubting it was no

sight for female eyes, "Oh la, don't think you'll fright *me* with your surgery!" she replied. Will shrugged, and led us to a little pen where the sturdied sheep had been put. "Why, the beast's learned itself a country-dance!" exclaimed Barbara.

It was rotating slowly, with its head on one side. Our new shepherd watched it; outside the pen, a lad had kindled a few sods of peat and was making the iron ready. The new shepherd turned to Will. "Have ye tried cuttin' ivver, Mr. Rothery?" Will shook his head.

"I've heard tell on't. I nivver seed it done."

"I cut three, last summer at Stangends" says the new man in his slow, cautious way. "They got right, an' all." Will looked at him with sharp interest.

"Did they now? I've kill't plenty, t' other road. Will ye cut this 'un?"

"If t' Maister's willin'?" says the new man, glancing at me. He told us, at Stangends they'd not lost a sheep from this method; only it must be done at the full-moon, the bone being softer then.

"She's full now" Will nodded. "And yon yow's parlish bad! Ye'd best have a try——" He placed a clipping-stool and held the ewe in his knees. The new man set some tar to heat and handed me a gull's feather. Then he knelt by the ewe and made some passes at its face, to learn which eye it was blind of; for the sight fails, contrary to the clot. Then he fetched out a slender knife, turned back the skin, and began to peck at the skull-bone; and so deft was he, it seemed no time till he had sawn away a piece the size of a brass farthing and lifted it clean off.

Barbara cried out.

"Get away-hint, you!" growled Will savagely without turning; and though I dare swear she had never in her life been so spoken to, she obeyed.

"Feather——" our new man says.

I slipped it into his hand. Gently, he wound it in the clot which showed in the hole, like a small currant-berry, and as gently withdrew it. "Tar, lad——" he beckoned. And when he had plugged the hole: "She'll do now, Mr. Rothery——"

"Thou'll do an' all, I reckon!" says Will; and the new man flushed at his praise. We left the ewe—for in such cases either they die under doctoring, or they're well shortly—and I'd glanced round to learn where Paradise had led Barbara,

when I heard Will catch his breath : " Od dang't, sithee who's here—— ! " Up the grass road from Calderbrig my uncle came riding slowly, while his eyes roved this way and that.

" Well, Nicholas ! " says he when he reached us, ignoring Will—and I think he meant no slight, only treated him as he would his own folk—" I'm finished early ; and since I've heard there is the relick of an antique forge in this neighbourhood, I fancied studying it. D'ye know where it lies ? " And when I said nay, but I'd heard my father speak of it, he addressed Will : " This good fellow may direct us ? "

" Is't a round clay floor, with some old-farrant slag-heaps till't ? " Will inquired. " Ye're on t' wrong spot then ; it's at Scalderskew, back of t' fell—but it's been shifted."

" By whom, pray ? " my uncle snapped.

" By t' Governmint, likely. For I've heard tell, some lang-nosed busybody carted t' slag away to mend roads."

" Indeed ? Then I am misinformed."

" You are that " Will nodded.

Paradise joined us, with Barbara ; the new man fetched our horses out, and we prepared to ride off. Will gave a " Good-day, sir " to me ; and to them, " Good-day," very civilly . . . as we rode home I had to smile despite myself at the thought of that valediction. For Will had never given me a sir in his life : nor would now, but his dour spirit grudged addressing Eldon and my father's son on level terms.

XXVII

I SUPPOSE, were I writing only my own selfish history at this time, you should hear most of Barbara : her whims, my jubulations and miseries, and the hardness of judging how I progressed with her, even from day to day. She was proud, tender, merry, scornful and good-comrade by turns, till I thought I should go demented, . . . But this tale is Yottenfews. So I must let you off my perplexities (which I dare say were neither easier nor harder to bear than any young chap's in love) and stick to Yottenfews' affairs in the six weeks from now till new-year, when the blow fell. And if the tale still seems too much about myself (as I suspect it may) you will remember I knew nothing save what happened under my nose, and not all that : whether because

of my stupidity, or my raw youth, or the long patient subtlety with which my uncle went to work, I leave you to settle.

We talked much, in evenings when he was free : sometimes with Barbara, sometimes alone or while she and Paradise played backgammon ; for my uncle allowed no cards. He showed me great courtesy ; and surprised me, not only by his range of knowledge (which I'd thought limited to iron) but by his studious and lively interest in our Fleming stock. He said, we Flemings were formerly of Bruges in the Netherlands, wool-weavers, who had removed to Cumberland when their city fell on hard times. But the old names persisted. "Turn back the records" he assured me "and you'll find them still cropping up : a Dirck here, a Nicholas or a Benedict there—but we've shortened him into Benet."

"It was a Benedict" said I "built this house——"

"In 1607 : but I suppose we'd settled here a century-and-a-half before *him*——" We were much mixed, however. For we had intermarried (my uncle said) with the older stock of the Northmen, sea-robbers and wanderers : a blue-eyed, fair-skinned, restless folk. "And indeed" he remarked, "you'd have hard work to find a properer Northman than your late father, if you searched Cumberland for a year——"

Yet he spoke oftenest about iron which, whenever he mentioned it, seemed to wake in him such an urgency as no other theme could. At Bigrigg now, thanks to this charcoal which his guns had earned for him, both furnaces were in blast. He had converted seventy tons of ore, and was still smelting. Meanwhile the forging of the pigs had begun ; so the new year promised him a fair profit. Yet all this (said he) was but a procrastination of the main problem : namely, their fuel-supply. He told me what others were doing. There was a project urged, to fetch wood from Norway ; and in Furness three firms—Fords, Knotts and Rawlinsons—proposed to build themselves a joint smelting-works on Loch Etive, and to ship their ore there. "But with what end" said he "except to cut their own trade's throat ?" He remained obdurate not to join them. It was here, here in Cumberland that fortunes were to be made ; here where our coal and ore adjoined, and their quality was unrivalled. Charcoal was obsolete, or would become so very soon, wherever men sought it ; let us learn coke-making, by hook or by crook, and abandon such crackbrained schemes.

"Has no one learned it ?" I asked him.

"More than a hundred years ago" said he "one Dudley used it—aye and made coke-iron, cast and wrought, as fine as ever I saw. They show you bars of his, down in Salop. But the great charcoal-makers united to put him down; they said he'd ruin 'em. And whatever his secret was, it died with him."

"At least" said I "he has proved this coke *can* be used!"

"It is being used . . ." said my uncle.

And now he told me something fresh: that in Salop at Coalbrookdale, the firm of Darby had been making coke-iron since five years. "They guard their secret, however. If *we* could come at it, we who are wealthier both in coal and in ore than any district of England . . ." He broke off; his eyes dreamed. I listened, eager; for he had stirred my interest and I thought he seemed about to confide in me. But he said no more, at this time.

I heard too, week by anxious week, news of the crushed Rebellion: and of reprisals on such lowland Jacobites as the Prince's retreat left bare. And since my uncle, through his London friends, was in close touch with government, we were better-informed than most. At Falkirk a month ago the highlanders gained a ragged sort of a victory against Hawley: but had made nothing of it, many slinking home for good with their loot. The Duke rode north post-haste to resume command; the siege of Stirling was raised; and the Prince had withdrawn himself despondently to the deserts of Inverness . . . My uncle's industry never slackened. At home he gave his small leisure to surveying the place, and proposed certain changes; for example, he undertook at his own cost the repair of our sea-barn—a ruin by Caldermouth which, as I have told, may have served once for saltmaking, but had fallen derelict. I assured him we could not need it. "But" says he "I live here beneath your roof; to discharge such small services, left undone otherwise, is the least I can offer." "Why sir, you pay your board!" said I; for he did so, each week. "But still" says he "we're your debtors——"

Soon after, one night when we were alone, he revealed me a deeper reason for desiring that everything at Yottenfews should be trim. "Their vengeance" said he with a troubled face "is already in operation. I'm told, at Manchester they've mulcted 'em in fines harsh beyond belief. Yet here, I think, they'll prove lenient——"

I inquired why.

"On the ground that a region, which has shown itself as apathetic as ours, will repay encouragement more than chastening. The North is lukewarm but not treasonous towards Hanover ; a little tact, and we're won. Yet, your father standing so unique—I misdoubt, Nicholas, if they touch no one else's property in all Cumberland, they'll have his ! Nay boy, don't let this cast you down, I've not finished——" And he went on more cheerfully : "In Scotland each rebel chieftain has some ill neighbour, to turn his catastrophe to account ; you've no such here. Besides, King George wants his profit ; if they evict you and put in some stranger, what follows ? Bankruptcy, hey ? Your stubborn folk would not do a hand's turn for the foreigner ; and with lambing imminent, and the clip—they're not such fools to ignore that ! I foresee rather (if they do take Yottenfews) they'll leave you as tenant-in-charge. You'll owe them rent in due course : meanwhile, no difference. You understand me, so far ? "

"Too well, sir " I sighed.

"Then hear further. I can't save Yottenfews ; it would be madness to try. But when they've taken it—when honour, so to speak, is avenged—they still must market it : which is where I shall meddle." He leaned forward earnestly. "I stand well with these fellows, Nicholas ! My own loyalty is unquestioned ; I've done 'em service, in the matter of the guns and elsewhere. Then I'm your guardian, and your kinsman ; your own orphaned innocence bears no stain. At the worst—at the very worst, I say—we'll get your tenancy confirmed ; but I feel confident we'll do better. Trust me, within a year or on your reaching your majority, they'll bestow Yottenfews back to *you* ! "

I asked, why should they, having once stolen it ?

"For the reason I've shown you : for conciliation's sake. To restore Yottenfews to your dead father's son, after some interval, were a shrewd mercy—just such a tempering of firmness with clemency as will pay 'em best, in these parts."

He paused there, for me to take his argument. At first I was not convinced ; but the more I reflected on our case, and on his credit with the Whigs, the more persuasive it seemed ; till after not much further talk, I must confess, he quite won me. Seeing which, he went on :

"Meanwhile we've each our part to play ; for our union is strength. Yours to have all so trim and workmanlike at Yotten-

fews to defy censure, when their commissioners shall arrive. Happy farms mean good subjects ; 'tis the malcontents they mistrust. Therefore, all smooth, well-ordered : nothing in neglect, like that sea-barn. Yet mark you—" and he looked at me very cunningly—" not quite so smooth nor so automatous that a stranger could take your place ! Your folk will help us there, unbidden ; for instance—" he gave me a wry smile—" the surliness of your fellow Rothery (much though I dislike the man) will convince even the least sensible commissioner that a change were unwise. Oh, we'll use *him*—and most effectively, I trust—at their visitation !"

"No, by your leave sir, we will not ; they could turn Will off too."

"Not with the lambing and the clip ahead of 'em " says my uncle.

"At the back-end, they could. Indeed I can't see what's to hinder 'em repopulating the whole valley ; they'll make what penal laws they choose, for such work. Let them ruin me, I'll have no hand in any scheme that might turn our folk adrift !"

He pondered that for a little. "I suppose you're right . . . yes, in autumn certainly" he nodded as though to himself. "But by then I'll have played *my* part . . . and Nicholas, there's a thing I must caution you ; three weeks back, at Ravenglass—" I had been wondering ever since, when he'd raise that. "What business led you there, I neither know nor am asking. I will say only, and most urgently, keep clear of all such affairs. Confound suspicion, for your farm's sake——"

"I'll promise you !" said I. "As for our folk's temper—I shouldn't wonder but the King's commissioner will be warned of it, and need no prompting of ours. But your own part, sir ?"

"Mine" he shrugged "is less savoury. We'll debate that next week-end, when my post from London comes in."

But at the week-end he was off to Cockermouth on some business—iron, or politics, or church or what, I don't know ; he had fingers in everything. He took Barbara, for two nights. So on the Saturday—St. David's Day it was, a boisterous March morning, and the Lent lilies budding along Calderside where soon they'd flame into gold—I and Paradise rode to Thornholm. I told him what my uncle said, and asked his opinion.

"Of your uncle ? You know it."

"Of our future, I mean."

"Hey, that's less simple ! A mere dissyllable does more than justice to *him* ; but your own labyrinth . . ." For awhile he rode on in silence, frowning at his fat thighs. Presently : "*Imprimis* : if what he reports is true, the estate's earmarked to be—what's his legal term?—judicially filched from you."

"Escheated, he called it."

"Aye, fitly : lawyers will have their joke ! Has he asked for your woods again ? "

"Not yet."

"Till he does that, depend on't, the danger's not imminent . . . But suppose he's speaking the truth. Without him, Yottenfews is lost ; with him (he now admits) it's lost too. Without him it goes for good, to some stranger ; with him, it may come back. But *is* he telling you the truth—and if so, why the devil ? "

"I believe still " said I, "whatever you think of him, he'd abhor to see the place thrown to strangers."

"I don't doubt it ! " says Paradise. "Nor that he may contrive to save it yet. The question is, on what terms—— ? " He was silent again, till we were close by Calderbrig. At last : "Me boy " says he gloomily, "my every instinct bids me clamour at you : Don't trust that ruffian a yard ! But rupture me, you've no option. . . ."

At Thornholm we found the door ajar, Will not in. Then his voice hailed us. We climbed, fathom-deep in gorse, to a spot up behind the house where a shed-roof had used to show ; but he'd pulled down the shed and was busy mattocking at the floor of it, a circle of hard burnt clay. "What's your job, Will ? "

He grinned. "I've been tell't, this is one o' them old smithies—what thy uncle was axin' for."

"Why, you told him there was none ! "

"Nor there won't, dinner-hour. He mun try Scalderskew."

"There's one there, then ? "

Will winked. "He'll divert hissel' laitin' it, howivver ! "

"Kush, kush ! " cried Paradise—as we use to call cattle. I turned to see what he was at, and found him chuckling over something he'd unearthed from the gorse : a cauldron, with a long snout. "The Cow ! " says he. "Gadsmelife, the Thornholm Cow ! Has she died on you ? "

Will nodded. "I'se gan to bury her for t' present. She's not the only lang-nebbed animal in this district—the more's our grief ! "

Riding home, my thoughts full of Barbara, I must needs fish for praise of her from him who was my best friend ; for I'd observed, though Paradise was blunt enough on my uncle, he kept mum about her.

" Oh aye, she's loveliness itself " says he placidly. " You'll remember, when Helen came out on the wall, old fellows nudged each other and lamented their lost youth ? She moves me likewise. Homer says, further——" But I cared little what Homer said : and informed him, endeavouring to draw him out, that Barbara liked his company. " She discovers good taste " says he.

I told him, to prick his interest, she had declared he was the very mentor for me, because he'd lead me astray.

" Zounds, that's libellous ! " he protested. "*Debetur puero reverentia*—when have I ever tried to lead thee anywhere, but in syntactical paths ? And a hard enterprise that was ! But I conceive Minerva did not cut me out for a schoolmaster ; for I don't care a button how my neighbour behaves himself, if he leave me alone. Your uncle, now, were a most conscientious pedagogue——"

" It's my uncle's daughter I'm talking of——"

But he went on : " Me you may use, at best, as a *memento mori* : or rather as a *memento vivere* more discreetly. You'd be far better so employed " he smiled " than at adventuring your innocent neck to snatch me from excisemen."

" She vows, she'd marry you——"

" If I were eighty years younger. She informed me so, the baggage—there's a pretty thing to be told ! I replied, senility has its compensations."

" D'you like her ? " I blurted out.

" Why yes, very well. She's adamant-proud—but so are most young women nowadays, and I daresay no worse for that. 'Tis your soft clingers grow more tedious eventually ; and they're more difficult to buy off . . . Will she have you ? "

" I don't know. I wish I did."

" So does she, I'll be bound. But how the devil can she decide, till she learns whether she'd be marrying Yottenfews or a bankrupt ? Be reasonable, me boy. You lovers expect so much ! "

" At least " said I angrily " you need not insult her——"

" I wasn't, rabbit her ! I protest, I'm her slave. Her mother must have been a fine woman. Damme, if I were eighty years foolhardier, I'd besiege her. Will that content you ? "

I said, miserable : “ You make fun of me ; but if you’d suffered . . . oh, I’d never have spoke of it, but I fancied you’d understand—— ! ”

Paradise did not answer. I rode silent too, my cheeks hot. At last, stealing a glance at him, I caught him watching me very tenderly, with no mockery in his eyes.

“ Me boy ” says he quietly, “ I understand this at least : if you were half as deep in love as you think yourself, you would have heaved me off my horse for so plaguing you—centenarian though I be ! ”

At twilight, my guests returned. Barbara shunned me : but joked industriously with Paradise over supper, while my uncle sat glum. Afterwards, taking me aside, he broke to me that his mail had come in from London : and that the house and lands and all must pass from our hands into His Majesty’s, a month from to-day.

XXVIII

“ EH DEAR ! ” Will groaned. “ It would have brokken thy da’s heart, the maff they’ve made o’ this business—— ”

We stood looking towards Yottenfews. From the road-brig you used not to see the house ; but it lay bare enough now, riding on a sea of daffodils in full bloom ; and between it and us a two-mile desolation of stumps, and the ground scarred with wheel-ruts.

They descended on us from Cleator : scores of red strangers, jeering and gloating over the havoc they were licensed to do. Now no tree remained. Yet even this might not have been so hard to bear, had the work been done properly . . . My father was the best forester in the county ; and could fetch down a tree (when thinning was necessary) whether with axe or crosscut saw, so clean and low that you admired as much as you grieved. It would have made him swear and weep to see how these savages had botched it ; toiling in haste, with no skill, chopping wrong, sawing wrong, so that the stumps stood high out of the earth, ragged and splintery, as if wild beasts had chewed them off.

There was no help for it.

The night he brought word that the estate must go, my uncle had a long talk with me. By secret favour (he explained) through friends in London, he was warned in good time at least : which knowledge must not be bruited. " We're in deep waters, boy. All now depends on how much influence I can wield to preserve Yottenfews from some stranger : and then, as opportunity and the greed of these cormorants shall direct, to wheedle it back for you. But it's costing me dear ; already I've pledged every penny I shall wring from Bigrigg this summer—aye, and paid in advance ! "

" Bribes ? "

" Presents, Nicholas, presents ! These fellows don't descend to bribes ; we are very scrupulous, between gentlemen . . . but I'm near out of fuel, my Carlisle charcoal I mean. Your timber must go ; 'tis our last weapon." A twofold urgency now compelled him. If the oaks were not down this month they would be too sappy for charcoaling ; and if the King's commissioners perceived what wealth of timber we had, they would help themselves first. Our strength lay in our foreknowledge. " What they don't find, they cannot steal " says my uncle. " We've a month yet ! "

" But sir, if they could take our oaks they can take the money you pay for 'em ? "

" Not until payment's made " says he subtly : " which I'll postpone, by your leave ! " So he gave me his note-of-hand for them, at a fair price ; and bade me secrete it, and tell nobody we'd been warned, or our act would be criminal ; and on Monday his gangs came.

But the next time old Paradise rode over, and saw the woods already half-stripped, he stared at me, sorrowful. "*Actum est*, then ! " says he. " How soon ? "

And I told him, from new-year.

You will recall, at this time new-year still fell on Lady Day. On the eve, Eldon brought me a sealed document which the Sheriff of Cumberland had dispatched, to inform him the house and property called Yottenfews had been attainted to the Crown for the reasons hereunder stated, *et caetera* : and that the Sheriff being in West Cumberland would take occasion to call on him, as trustee for the said estate, and to deliver the injunction in person.

" That's friendly in Pattinson " shrugged my uncle. " He

could have sent a deputy ; but from regard for me, I think, comes himself."

"Must I receive him, sir?"

"As you please. Maybe—it were easier not : if he fancied to ask what knowledge you already had of this decision, I mean."

"Then I'll excuse myself——" For indeed I'd no wish to meet this Sheriff (another Crackenthorp, I prefigured him) who'd sit sneering or blustering, and patronise me on the hearth which he was taking away. So I went about other business.

He would be gone by noon, said my uncle ; but at tea-time, returning from Calderbrig, I found we'd misjudged. A stranger was riding towards me : an enormous gross man, the fattest ever I saw, with a gray wig and a great fiery-beaming face and a servant attending him.

"Mr. Fleming, I think?" says he. "My name's Pattinson—of Penrith, sir ; and I'm happy to make your acquaintance!" With that he embraced his horse, and rolled forward on his belly (damning the groom who would have helped, and bidding him clear out) till he contrived to work his knee across the croup and came down like a landslide. "Will ye walk to the brig with me?" he said : and went on, all in a breath, "You know what brings me, and a damned filthy cowardly disgusting business it is. I met your father once or twice, stab me, I wish to God that any other had been Sheriff of Cumberland this spring and not I!"

"You can't help your duty, sir" I said ; for he seemed much put out, almost to tears.

"That's so. Well Mr. Fleming, Nicholas I'll call you, dammit, I knew your father once, did I say that? Well Nicholas, at any rate things might be worse, you're to bide in possession. They can't farm Yottenfews from Westminster, hey? I've talked with your uncle, who assures me this place is very capably managed—but I'd heard that myself. And I told *him*, I thought a foreigner would find it harder to handle, and that His Majesty might be as well advised to render it back to you, when this pothor is cleaned up. Such a hope had not crossed his mind, he said—but I made him see sensible : and in brief, undertook to urge your case, when I send up my report. Then, as for money : your banker shows me—for the lord damn me, I must pry into everything—you've got no more than you will need to conduct the place ; I'll tell Westminster that, too. Lastly, I've been instructed to report if there is anything about the estate that can

be seized, without crippling it : timber for example. But I perceive that, owing to—ahem—certain deforestations (which are no business of mine) timber is short, here. So I think they'll absolve you—stand, you bastard, stand still, you lousy brute, you old toad, dang-rabbit you ! ” he ended, hopping fantastically with one foot in the stirrup.

I ventured to hoist him up. In his seat, crimson-faced with the exertion of getting there, he turned and blessed me most heartily. “ Courage ! ” he cried. I watched him, gratefuller than I'd had time to say, till he jogged out of sight.

Soon after this my uncle asked if I had given any thought to what he told me six weeks ago, about coking ; and I confessed, no. There had been more than plenty on my mind since I learned Yottenfews must be lost : and lambing now close on us. In the last days of March (which we compute the first of spring) the ewes are brought off the fell and overlooked, and the weak kept down on rich pasture. The rest go back ; but before long they must be gathered again, and from mid-April they bring forth. So between this and that, and the slow careful driving that they need, being near their time, new-year is our thrang season. I could have told my uncle too (but did not, for he'd meant kindly in teaching me) that I was too disgusted of Bigrigg since Candlemas to care how his iron was made : and more, since the oaks went.

“ It is worth your thought, though ” said he. “ You perceive the vile nature of the task which now falls to us—I mean my share of it, which is to line these rogues' pockets. I've done my uttermost, and so have you with your trees ; yet when *they're* burned, we're cold again ! And all this while we've the pit-coal beneath our feet, if we knew how to coke it . . . ” He paused, drumming his long fingers. And presently : “ Some *do* know, Nicholas ! ”

“ In Salop, you've told me, sir ? ”

“ Coalbrookdale, aye. And now in Lancashire, much nearer : at Cartmel—the Wilkinsons : more Quakers . . . by heaven those peevish rascals have a knack of prospering, past belief ! ” He broke off. He stared me in the eyes. I had still no clew to his meaning. Then his words came in a flood : “ O Nicholas, help me ! I beg of you, as I have begged no human help since I started. Go to Cartmel for me ! Dig out this stubborn secret of theirs ! ”

“ *I*—to Cartmel ? ”

“ Nay, listen. Here’s a thing I have had in mind since I first showed you Bigrigg ; none can do it like you. You’ve seen something of iron ; you’re shrewder than you appear—Mossop tells me, at a glance you marked our trick of roasting on wet ground.”

“ But, sir——”

“ Oh, I know what you’ll say : that if *I* went there, I should not be let near anything worth my scrutiny ! But you’re different. You’re young, you’re raw, you appear simple. You’ll come as an apprentice merely, to be learned the elements of the trade. They’ll not show you their coking—but you’ll be on the spot, day in day out ; you’ll keep your eyes open ; you’ll make friends—you’ve a facility at that, I’ve perceived. Sooner or later you will see or hear, or elicit from one of them, more than they quite intended . . . nay, listen still ! If you succeed, you bring back such a treasure to Bigrigg as will make us rich beyond hope—for you’ll have *your* share, don’t fear ! Enough to buy Yottenfews ten times over. You’ll do this, you’ll do it, won’t you ? ”

But before I could answer he went on, with a plain importunity which (from one so contained) seemed somehow piteous and terrible : that he’d long set his heart on this very plan, but held back till we were forced ; that money only could save us and he’d no hope of it but through me ; that he’d first thought of Coalbrookdale, but now chose Cartmel, finding that I could be commended there from a source they’d not question ; that the seizure of Yottenfews gave ample cause for my turning from sheep to iron, and the late riot an argument against Bigrigg ; and my youth would disarm mistrust . . . I kept wondering how to answer ; for his project revolted me, as well as taking me by surprise ; nor did I understand till now some hints of his that had puzzled me.

His voice ceased ; he waited my reply, breathing short, like one who has run a race. But I had barely shown that I disliked his scheme, when he began again : “ Why though ? All trade means rivalry ; this Quaker secret is a challenge—beside which consider, coke is the Almighty’s gift to be jointly enjoyed by all, not niggardly hid in their sectarian napkin ! They vaunt themselves Christians ; what sort of Christianity is it, to usurp God’s bounty ? And indeed what harm could they suffer in any case, their trick known ? ”

"I suppose they could suffer from a drop in iron-prices" said I.

"If all knew, yes. But our sole rivalry could not injure 'em ; *we* should not undercut their price——"

"We'd but share the napkin !"

His face darkened, and I saw I had vexed him ; but it vexed me no less, the way he dragged God into an affair which was a trade-duel simply. I said : "I've no taste for your proposal——"

"But why not, why not ?"

"Since you force me, sir : at Bigrigg they took me for your spy . . . if they'd been right, I could have still excused myself and patched my conscience, perhaps, being known to every one as your kinsman. But to become your spy indeed, while pretending to serve another man, is something I can't stomach."

"Your squeamishness may cost Yottenfews."

"I must chance that."

For a few seconds he said nothing, nor looked at me, only sat staring at his long white cruel hands. At last, with no more eagerness nor any life in his voice, but with that cold finality which had daunted me since we first met : "You may repent it, I believe" he said ; and so left me.

XXIX

IN APRIL came news of a great fight at Culloden, somewhere in Inverness.

For a long while the Prince's cause had been hopeless, though sanguine Jacobites still prophesied a clan-rally and an invasion by the French ; but now the cause was extinct. "You may thank Heaven" says my uncle. He was in savage-cold good-humour that day—if you could call it goodhumour—rubbing his thin hands. "I'm told, the Duke gave no quarter ! The Duke wants peace, like all loyal men ; and there's no peace with live rebels. I'm told, a massacre : which though it mayn't be true, I still hope—— !" The news roused him to confidence. "The surer peace, the nearer that Indemnity which must follow—though not till after the assize. If we lie quiet and attract no further notice, we'll weather it ; the Duke will keep their minds full !"

The Duke's fame was at its height. He had driven out the

invaders ; he had pursued and scattered them, where Hawley had botched the job ; he was rewarded with a twenty-thousand-guinea annuity from the State, and with an oratorio from the apt Mr. Handel ; nor for some time did those grim details filter through, which changed his title to Butcher, and his fame to a hiss.

Meanwhile at home we were thrang lambing, at work day and night : which stopped us from too often remembering that this was our home no longer, and that we'd likely find ourselves pitched out after midsummer, master and men and all. I found, every one blamed my uncle. No use reminding them that he'd had no hand in my father's disaster : nor hinting, if Eldon were not shielding us we'd be out now. " That's *his* story—— ! " they commented. I told Will flat (and I think Paradise also worked on him) that to conduct the farm and to co-operate with my uncle were our one hope, but I never wholly convinced him ; I had a three days' tussle to extort his solemn promise that, whatever happened or whatever gossip might say, he would help me to keep the peace. Still, he did promise, and I knew I could count on that.

Of Cartmel I said nothing to Will : nor had no chance with Paradise, for he kept away from us during lambing. I went in search of him, one Sunday between this and May, but found his room shuttered. " He's away off since term-end " the school-porter said. So no help there.

I longed for counsel. I had repulsed my uncle sharper than I'd likely have done, had he been any one else ; for he still roused my mistrust ; yet he'd showed friendly . . . Sometimes as I tramped Kinniside or worked with Will at the sheep, sick at heart over Yottenfews, I damned my uncle and my conscience together, and inclined to sink myself in his plot. Then I'd think : Aye, but to sneak in and out, watching and listening day by day to pick up more than I should, and to defraud folk who were paying me the compliment of making me a good craftsman . . . ? So I told myself first, I could not leave till lambing was done : and then, till clip. And I doubt I might never have gone at all, but for Barbara.

I have missed Barbara out of my account of these long weeks, lest I'd weary you. She was all moods to me by turns, while our fate at Yottenfews hung uncertain—but mostly friendly, or indifferent at worst : rarely so bitter-scornful as she had shown

before the great house burned down. And I snatched hope from this ; I fancied, for all her anger on that wild night, she felt kindlier to me for saving her, though we never talked of it ; or maybe the memory of how I'd held her in my arms in the wood . . . but I kept off that too. Whatever it cost me, I determined to bide my time. I had her with me, I blessed myself ; patience must win.

But from new-year she altered. The place, she said, wearied her ; if she rode with me now, she chose week-ends when Paradise could accompany us ; and I began to fear lest his conjecture was right, that she'd marry Yottenfews or hold off. The worse I did, the more my passion tempted me to have it out with her once for all ; but she gave me no opening. My uncle, I daresay, watched us pretty shrewdly, for he must have been aware how things stood : but without interference. Never in life have I known any man who discovered his thoughts less. He'd thanked me formally for protecting Barbara from the rioters ; since which, I cannot once recall his passing any comment on the relations between us two . . . Then came the Rake business.

My cousin brought with her a pet spaniel, which had saved itself from the fire. An ailing, peevish little gormandiser it was, all hair and eyes : not quite a lap-dog (Barbara was not the lap-dog kind) but as ill-tempered, being spoiled or bullied according to her caprice. Mostly she neglected it ; but sometimes for lack of other idleness she would comb it assiduously, or tease it, till it snarled at her and she cuffed it and threw it down. "Yon beast stinks" said Hannah bluntly. "Ye mun have Mr. Nicky doctor it, ye ken nowt about dogs !"

"'Tis not *my* animal that stinks !" pouted Barbara, glancing towards Rake.

"All house-dogs stink" said my uncle amiably. He held that dogs belonged outdoors : as they do, only Rake's long service was privileged. But he forebore to meddle : which Rake acknowledged by accepting him as a person free of the house. In a while Rake accepted Barbara's pet too, but less patiently ; his hearth was sacrosanct ; if he found it usurping there, he would slide one great paw beneath its little silken barrel and trundle it out of his way. Barbara detested him. "That surly brute——" she called him ; for with her he'd have nothing to do. "He's past work, I can't think why you harbour him ; I'd have baned him ten years back if he'd been mine !"

"He's a good servant yet" I told her; for indeed, within limits of his bodily strength, he was worth three young dogs on the fell. However she would hear nothing in his praise, but took all occasions to rebuke or disparage him: he paying no heed, except that sometimes he would turn his eye on me in a dignified puzzlement. "Thou's brought some new-farrant notions intil this spot" he seemed to say. "But likely thou'll know best?"

He stayed close about the house. To him, my father was not dead; he attended his homecoming. Not even for Will would he stir farther than Calderbrig, unless I went too: and for no one, outside our bounders. So on May-morning, when he failed to appear, I was beat to think what prevented him. We were dyking that day, in the small beck by Yottenfews whose floods had undercut the bank till it dammed itself, and I made sure the dog would find us. It was impossible that he should have strayed; as for traps, there were none on all the estate, for my father would never abide them. Barbara was riding on the sands; after tea when our job was done I went down to meet her, wondering if they'd made friends at last. I saw her far off, alone.

Down here at Caldermouth where our waste-ground ran out on dunes and shingle, no one ever came, unless to ride some errand to Saint Bees or Ravenglass by the shore. I waited by our sea-barn (which Eldon had now rebuilt, fitting strong doors to it) till Barbara joined me. A bright green riding-habit she was wearing, to-day, and one of those newfangled gipsy-hats which had just come into fashion; and when I asked had she seen anything of Rake: "He's missing, then?" says she cheerfully. "I do believe he has died at last!"

"Died! Why should he?"

"Would you have your antick immortal?"

"But—unless he's found poison from some place?"

"Some nameless benefactor, doing good by stealth as Mr. Pope recommends!" She began laughing. And it came to me suddenly, last week she'd cut at Rake with her whip: and had vowed, if she knew where they sold arsenick in Whitehaven, she would count it worth the ride in. I stared up at her.

"Surely you'd not do such a thing!"

"Why, very willingly—what's a dog more or less? You accuse *me*, then!"

"I—I think——"

"You think! You don't know what to think, Mr. Circum-

spect? Think what best suits you——” And she switched her cob, to ride past.

But I stayed her: vexed, stiff with bending all day in the beck, goaded by her derision. Our trouble at Yottenfews had worn me to a sharp edge, and my desperation of winning her, till I could stand no more. “Why d’you treat me so?” I burst out. “You must know—oh, I’ve loved you, I’ve been patient——”

“Patient? You’ve hoped, then!”

“Oh, you know what I’ve hoped! I’ve held back for you to know your mind! I’ve borne—borne torment from you, since——”

“Since you saved me, since you chose to play knight-errant? Oh lud, I should be gratefuller, no doubt, for the tedium of this asylum!”

“You’re unfair! I——”

“I’m very sensible, believe me, of the debt we are clogged with.”

“Don’t say it! I’ve never dreamed of claiming thanks, from your father or you——”

“But we owe them, and that’s as irksome—though, faith” she sneered, “I think you’re now as much my father’s pensioner as he yours!”

“Oh, what’s that to do with it! I love you, I’m mad for you, I’ve given you my heart to tear——”

“And I’ve scratched it a trifle? Well, now you may have it back. Next time don’t wear it on your sleeve, my dear; it’s provocative.”

“In the wood when I kissed you——”

“Oh la, la! I knew that had to come up!”

“You lay quiet in my arms——”

“I smacked your face, which a less obstinate rusticity might have interpreted——”

“But since then! We’ve talked, you’ve been friendly sometimes? O Barbara, if you’d love me——”

“I’d love your dog!” she mocked. “But prefer my own, thankye . . . and my own choice in lovers. Have you no eyes?”

“Your choice in—lovers?”

“Oh lud, he’s seen nothing, is it possible! Listen, Nick——” She swayed down to me, as though fearing to be overheard even in this loneliness. “Next time you’re courting, ’ware your friends!”

"My friends?"

"Your friends, your politer friends!" she mimicked. "In the first vacuity of this hole, I put up with you. You were unwise though, to fetch in a rival who so outshone yourself."

"Oh, God! Paradise——?"

"Indeed a paradise, after you! Hey, but he's merry, he has wit, he knows how women should be won!"

"You're going to marry him?"

"Maybe . . . oh la yes, he's too old—and you're too young—and at least it's none of your business!"

"Does Eldon know?"

She said, white with anger: "If you split, I'll never speak to you again——"

"Nay, don't vex yourself, you won't get the chance" I cried; "for I'm done with you, done with you!"

"You never begun, you fool!" says she . . .

I met my uncle returning.

I told him without preamble: "I've changed my mind. I'm going to Cartmel . . . aye, in the morning. There's no urgency to hold me here, now lambing's done. Will you tell me where I'm to find these Wilkinsons, and if they're expecting me? I'll take a note from you, I suppose?" I spoke hurriedly, fearing he'd ask my reasons. But I need not; he showed no curiosity.

"I'm glad you've come to this" said he. "As for an introduction, I arranged it some time ago, counting on your good sense. Not from myself directly: better otherwise, you'll agree? You need only present yourself, as the young friend that Banker Pardshaw wrote 'em of—they are Quakers, in touch with him. You'll want money; I have it drawn."

"Then" said I "all's settled——"

Late that night, he came to my room. "It were well" said he, "if I'm to administer the place in your absence, you leave written authority?"

"No need: I'll tell Hannah. Will Rothery knows you are in charge of my affairs, what is left of them; you may trust all farm-business to him." He did not press his request.

So in the morning I gave him time to leave for Bigrigg, and took breakfast alone. Barbara did not show herself. I had hitched Brigadier to the sycamore—it was in bud now, and a tag from old Hesiod's farm-almanack crossed my memory:

"When you see leaves on the fig's topmost shoots, the size of a crow's footprint, your spring-enterprise may begin——" Paradise once read me it. . . .

Hannah came out, when I had strapped my valise on Brigadier. "Hey, what's this then?"

"I'm going visiting. Mr. Fleming's in charge here, say."

"Visitin' where till? How long for?"

But I could not endure questioning; I was too nigh tears. "I'll be back some time, likely: clip, or harvest—I don't know. God bless you, my dear!"

"Nay, but hinny——"

"Care for Rake—if he's found" I called back, and left her gaping.

Brigadier picked his way down Calderside, treading daintily in the shingle. I lacked heart to look back. For I was thinking, I left everything behind that had mattered: and to most of it, no return. My father lost, and Barbara, and old Paradise: Yottenfews too, maybe. . . . But I resolved, if Yottenfews could be saved, I'd save it by any means. Old friends, and love, and anything that humans had a hand in, were vanity. "Put not thy trust——" Humans were the snare; humans lured you and tricked you—well then, trick them! Since honour and decency were out, you'd no choice; you must dig with whatever dirty fork best served, to snatch your share from the midden: as I'd snatch Yottenfews. . . .

For I vowed, Yottenfews I would have: by spying or any shift. It was worth all. It was worth even certain treasured things, such as square-dealing with your neighbour; for your neighbour cheated you like the rest. These only—fell and sheep and stream and sky—these never cheated you. Through these you'd win peace, in the end. By these, because they neither changed nor cared, heartbreak and disappointment and man's treachery were put out of countenance. These endured. . . .

I raised my eyes, and saw Paradise.

He came on slow, at the strait place where Calder skirts the bluff and leaves bare room to ride under. He pulled up, and our beasts nuzzled. "Well Nicky, I'm here!" says he at length. "I wasn't home till last night."

"You'll find her waiting" I told him.

"She's informed you, then?" He fell silent; but his horse blocked the way still. I did not look at him: I don't think he looked at me. His voice said: "You'll call me an old fool——"

"I call you nothing——" But I could hardly speak to him. "When you're safe rid of me, you can ask yourself what you are."

"Aye" says he, very heavily. "That's the last riddle we've all got to ask ourselves. . . . O Nick——!"

"I've nothing to say to you."

"Too easy said——" muttered he.

I pushed past, turned the corner of the bluff, and rode forward. I listened, dreading he might follow; but after an interval I could hear his beast stepping on. So we each went our road in the fresh morning—he up Calder to Barbara: I towards Ravenglass, by the shore.

XXX

CAELUM NON ANIMUM MUTANT, says Juvenal: they change their sky, not their heart, who roam . . . Cartmel changed both, for me.

I had lived by the shore since I was born, and not heeded it. A barren, straight-ruled coast, ours is: empty, Saint Bees Head showing at the one end of it, Black Combe at the other; and seaward (but only on clear days) the far blue softness of Man. It was all lost ground, to our thinking; our life lay inland.

But at Cartmel, much different. This was a broad, green, hilly-wooded tongue between rivers; beyond whose estuaries, the two coasts curving sicklewise closed a vast bay, dry at low tide. So that whichever way you rode, towards Furness or Lancaster, you must descend the shore and trust yourself to this wilderness: miles of firm sand, the sea now almost out of sight, and green fells all round you. For the woods grew down to the beach, with hills close over them (like a picture of Italy) and great fells crowding these in turn, not aloof as with us; and at flood-tide the sea ran strongly in among the roots of the hills, and ships passed round their woody bends with freights for Millthrop or Levenfoot, far inshore. It was unlike anything I had dreamed of. I explored it piecemeal, on Sundays mostly, as chance offered. On weekdays I was at the works: and here too, found a new world.

For at Lindale in Cartmel (where the works were) appeared no sign of discontent, nor of idleness. I had grown used to think of redstained men and sullen faces inseparably; but here folk

were carefree at their job, and in evenings took infinite delight in a lean little hair-spring sort of dogs which they all seemed to breed, and raced against one another. Whippets, they called these : and cherished them like their own bairns. John took me down to see them run, within a week of my coming ; for we'd made friends almost at sight, and a grand comrade he was to me . . . but I press on too fast.

John's father, Isaac Wilkinson the Quaker, owned and managed these works. He was tall, spare and bearded, in the prime of life, and had been overman at Backbarrow Forge five miles off, where the Leven meets the sea. But being thrifty, and a rare cunning ironworker, about six years ago he brought his savings and his cunning to Lindale, and set up for himself. What fame awaited him and John, needs no telling ; they were on their way to it, even now. The father was downright, forceful, something stern (I thought at first) with shaggy eyebrows and a head like Zeus in the picturebooks : the son ingenious and merry. But they were alike in one thing ; they dreamed iron, day and night.

Just now John's dream was to improve the new-farrant "fire-engines," used by some ironmasters to increase the force of their blast ; but he told me, such engines wasted three-fourths of their power through ill construction. "It's t' iron-work cripples 'em !" said he. "Till we can cast a cylinder that is a cylinder, they're worth nowt—" To reform iron was his ambition ; were that once compassed, there was no limit to the friendly offices his beloved stuff should do mankind. . . .

"Cannons and cannonballs, pikes, swords, muskets !" I laughed at him—I recall this was during our first week, but we'd took to each other oddly ; we were just of an age. John stared.

"Hold on ! Thou'll start trouble—for thou mun admire, we're civilised in this spot !" Then he confided to me, they were asked to make some guns for the Duke of Cumberland this last winter ; and he'd been crazy to ; but his father refused. "Fleming of Egremont got the contract—he'll be kin to thee, I suppose ?" It seemed, there had been some domestic bitterness over this matter : "I'm a backslider, eh ? The Old Man's fair shocked with me—" But John didn't care (he was iron-hard himself, as I soon found) and though he'd made peace with the Old Man for the present, he would not always stop at Lindale but would some day forge what he chose. Meanwhile he had

no lack of schemes in his head, less reprehensible : " Iron ships, I'll make : and long carts, one horse'll pull on iron rails easier than six pull a waggon : houses, maybe. Here's the draft for a wind-mill—look, it works out cheaper nor stone ! " He had built his first ship already. At Lindale they mixed their coke with peat—they made no secret about that—and to fetch peat they had dug themselves a canal, on which this boat of John's plied. " Wilkinson's Pen-Tray," the locals nicknamed it—it was the talk of the place : a long shallow barge, which John had himself designed and built, boy though he was.

I was turned over to John's care the day after my arrival. Under him I began my study afresh, with more pleasure than I'd thought possible ; for it was like being back among our shepherds, to feel the harmony between these Wilkinsons and their men, Quaker or not : and the place fair as any I had seen, not grim like Cleator. Besides, my uprooting from old jobs, and from everything I'd been used to, worked on me as a balm ; I had loved Yottenfews, past bearing to think on it, but was too much entangled there with things best forgotten ; here, forgetfulness might be learned . . .

Well then, these Lindale works resembled Bigrigg works pretty closely. They had their smelting-furnace with its pig bed, their great forge with its hammer : paddles to blow the blast for each, on sluices from Lindale beck : and their ore-mine adjacent. Also a paddle working the big grindstone on which box-irons were finished ; for Isaac held a patent of these, and was making his fortune selling them to laundresses who ironed the fopdoodles' cravats. Only their coking-ground (where carts brought in the loads of coal that crossed the bay at highwater) was enclosed by a stockade through which none went but the Wilkinsons, their overman, and an old labourer who had been hurt powder-blasting and was since deaf and dumb. I perceived, noting this, what pains they took to keep their coke-secret hidden : but inferred also that the job itself was not onerous, done by so few hands. My own discipleship began at the furnace, where I learned (timorous at first) to dam the bright molten stream at the just moment, and divert it towards a fresh sow. I learned next to mix charges—the peat, the gray brittle coke, the red crushed ore—and to shoot them into the furnace-throat with no more loss of heat than I needed : and to gauge from the brightness of the flame what force of blast must be used. I

learned, when pigs were run, to detect if misjudgment in the charge or blast had produced us a spoilt litter : hot-short iron, brittle while still red ; or cold-short, brittle on cooling. Next, being promoted to the forge, I learned the right softness for a bloom of iron as it goes to the hammer : and the nice delicacy to be used in hammering, as the bloom thins down to a plate. After some time John let me beat a plate myself, and proud I was of it : till it cooled and we stood it up on edge, and he taught me its faults and advised me to write a list of them, for he vowed they were too diverse and numerous to be carried in one chap's head . . . At Bigrigg I had had my interest roused, as an onlooker ; here, handling iron for myself, I began to acquire some rudiments of the art with which it is made.

My first week, John's father hardly spoke with me. But on the Saturday (or seventh-day, as it was called at the works) he summoned me to his office. " Well, Nicholas Fleming, here is thy wage " said he.

I drew back ; for I'd supposed I got no wage but rather paid for my schooling, and that my uncle would have prearranged some such fee. " Why, sir——" I began.

" My name, friend, is Isaac Wilkinson " he corrected me. But to address him thus, without so much as a " Mr." even, was beyond my assurance. He saw me confused, and went on : " I am paid to learn thee thy job, but not to use thy strength *gratis*. Thou's apt, my son says. Happen thou'll stop with us, to our joint profit : or happen not——" His eyes searched me, under his deep shaggy brows, till my guilt half-persuaded me he had read my vile secret. " Meanwhile thou labours for us, and a labourer's worth his hire."

" I doubt, sir . . . I doubt, *I'm* worth none ? "

" That's for me to—come, pick thy money up, I've Christ to look in the face ! " And so much did his words startle me, I took the half-crown away. Next Saturday when we knocked off, John told me he'd been bid invite me to dine with them on the morrow. I'd have refused for shame ; yet lacking any glib excuse, I must promise ; and the first one to greet me entering their gate was Pardshaw's little maid, Faith.

John made fun of our meeting. I had not forgot, in spite of my surprise, to call Faith by her first name : "——as you bade me in Egremont ! " Then I asked after her father.

" He can speak for himself ! " says she.

And while I stood puzzled, and John laughed, Isaac came to my rescue. "This baby" says he "is not Jethro Pardshaw's, but mine! Last winter we'd the small-pox here, and packed her off on a visit——"

"To her uncle—aye truly, Jethro is my brother" Mistress Wilkinson now informed me. "But praise be, the small-pox passed us by, and we've Faith home since Candlemas."

"Thou lacked faith, sending her" grinned John; but she silenced him with a look. He told me afterwards, there'd been an argument between his parents whether Faith should go, or whether Providence must be trusted in; but his mother's judgment prevailed. Now she went on, to me:

"Our Faith gave thee a fair report, or ever we'd Jethro's letter; so when that came, my man said aye. Thou sees, thou'rt no stranger! But our Faith should have said whose she was."

"Why, mother" Faith cried, "we were barely acquainted!"

And the ironmaster nodded: "Aye, wife! Thou forgets **this** lad had enough to worrit him, never mind Faith!"

I wondered could he mean Barbara: and flushed, Faith's eyes on me. But it was Yottenfews he had in mind, for his wife answered: "Now Isaac Wilkinson, thou can let such talk be! The Lord will settle; in His mean time, the boy hath work——" To me she said cheerfully: "Friend, thou'rt in all prayers here. Maybe as Jethro Pardshaw hopes, they'll restore thy inheritance; but if not, why, this world's a good roomy place, and John says *thy* brains won't starve!"

"Aye" John laughed, "our trade will find room for the profoundest brains, once this land's pacified——"

"Which Christ looks like aimin' to make soon" my host added. For indeed the news ran that way. No rebel troops were under arms; their leaders, except the Chevalier himself, had mostly fled abroad or been captured; fear of French invasion was past. The Friends (as this sect call themselves) had sent a complimentary address to His Majesty, and appended loyal thanks to the Duke—which addition much vexed old Wilkinson; for it made Friends accessory (said he) to the Duke's butcheries, and the wicked and him that loveth violence the Lord's soul hateth.

Faith sighed: "Say one can't choose?" She still watched me.

"One can" said Isaac. "*We* chose, denyin' the Duke guns. And so did our folk in Durham: who were jailed rather than

pay a militia-tax, yet sent ten thousand woollen waistcoats to Warwickshire, to comfort troops in the field."

"Both guns and waistcoats helped the Duke, *I think!*" Faith commented; and old Wilkinson pinched her ear.

"Maybe they did, Miss Clever! But thou can't shed blood with a woollen waistcoat, eh? There's thy answer for that!" He began speaking of the Friends, and of George Fox their founder who had been a shepherd once and liked that job well: "Till in time, the Seed ripenin', his misdoubt drove him from one counsellor to another, and he was brought gey low—which was Christ nudgin' him towards His own purposes, but George did not yet know this. At last three priests whom he'd approached gave him these three advices: the first, to take to tobacco and sing psalms, both which George disliked; the second, to be let blood and purge himself; and the third, angrily, to use more care while they disputed up and down the garden-path, and to keep his feet off them flowers. Then George perceived that doctors of divinity were no help to him, and that Christ dwelt in the heart; so he turned preacher. . . ."

What moved me in Isaac, then and later, was the tang of his piety: outside anything I had met. The most consistently religious man I knew, was my uncle; his speech was scrupulous, his fleshly moderation severe, his churchgoing hindered by no business whatever, God's name constantly on his lips. Yet I think happiness still eluded him. He had a sort of a profound mistrust in all creation, aye, from God down: as though despite his faith (if I may say it without blasphemy) he foresaw God might nurse some shabby trick to play on him, up His sleeve. But these folk used God as comrade, naming Him genially and with confidence, in friendly honour, though with no Sabbath voice; and their quiet joy of Him, and of each other in Him, shone through all that they did. Isaac himself put me in mind of my dead father—oddly, I admit; for my father professed no urgent faith, yet had a daily beauty and serenity in his life, equal to any. In him it grew from a love of everything that he dealt with—folk, beasts, and countryside—and blossomed in a ripe gaiety, not witty nor frivolous, but as mellow as sun on a wall. So Isaac Wilkinson (whom at first I'd thought stern) in his own home discovered a quaint humour which beamed equally, whether his theme were God or man or ironmaking, or the Society of the Friends. I remember, that dinnertime (some question about the force of prayer cropping up) he

recalled an old dame of his acquaintance who held music devilish, as many of their sect do ; and says she, " I prayed that none o' my bairns might be tuneable ; but I needn't have fashed mysel', for none was ! " A story which would have made my father laugh, as deeply as it would have outraged my uncle.

Our meal done, he read a piece of scripture : King Ahab strutting out to war in defiance of the prophet's warning, and his command to " put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace." And I'll not soon forget the zest and glee with which he read Micaiah's answer : " If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by *me* ! " It made the tale live, so that I longed to applaud : Isaac himself chuckling.

Later we walked in his walled garden, now at full bloom. At Egremont my uncle used to have tulips grown : stiff, sullen, varnished things, but then newfangled and costly. Here were more homely flowers. Stocks and tall daisies, bushes of lavender and rosemary, foxgloves and gilliflowers and hollyhocks made a great bank between the walk and the wall, with a sunflower-regiment posted over them ; trees grew according to their kind, not clipped fantastically ; and everywhere there were roses. " They say we Friends do well at flowers " he reminded me ; " but thou sees, Nicholas, this south slope helps us ; out there by Lancaster they're more bleak——" He pointed across the bay : the tide now up, the sea a silver dancing filigree in the sunshine. Ten miles off, Poulton shore stretched level and hazy-hot with the smoke of Lancaster feathering it, and its mild fells behind.

He began speaking about Yottenfews (of whose loss Pardshaw had written) and bade me not vex myself ; and then he asked how I liked Lindale ways ; and I thanked him for John's kindness. " Why " says he, " John would have thee bide here for good an' all—but thy heart's with thy sheep ? " And when I told him I had no assurance they would ever see me again, being mine no longer, he replied cheerfully : " That's in Christ's lap—thou'll think I counsel thee too cheap, if I bid thee despise thy present loss, myself unmeddled with ? Eh but, believe me, I've known such a like distress in my youth : in the old tribulation-days I mean, which our folk were ordained to suffer." And resting one hand on my shoulder : " 'Tis a hard tug, to be snatched from the rock whence one was hewn and sent

wanderin' ; only I'll urge thee in the Lord, forbear all bitterness against the enemies who have done this, for their blind wrath may be thy profit ; they're in His hand, like us. Say iron's His job for thee, and not sheep : or say, neether ? Young Saul went ass-laitin', and was fetched to rule Israel. I pastured pigs : nor guessed, when persecutors robbed me of'em, that He'd turn my pigs into iron. He's an old hand, thou knows ; He has more ingots in the forge nor He lets on ; He didn't start *His* job yesterday ! ”

By and by Faith and John came out, and we joined them beneath the mulberry where they'd found mother asleep, they said—but she vowed she'd been reading. I talked with Faith, telling her such news as could interest her : and especially about the riot at the mines, which happened soon after she left. Her father misliked that business. “ It's an ill sign, all this uncharity between master and folk—and not only in Cumberland : the cloud no bigger nor a man's hand. We've not seen t' last of it ! ”

We sat long in talk. They made me promise to come again ; nor was it till later, when I'd had time to meditate the quiet happiness of this day, that I asked myself where I was tending.

XXXI

JUNE CAME, but still no news from home. My uncle had promised me to write, when the fate of Yottenfews was decided ; as time passed and I heard nothing, the apprehension with which I expected every post grew less keen ; and then by unperceived degrees I found myself settling into this new life, and its interests beginning to strike root in me, and my hurt healing.

Barbara, you'll inquire—— ? Well I suppose, were I concocting a romance from this chronicle, I should paint myself passing sleepless nights for her : which I'd foreseen. The truth turned out different. Whether my love were carnal only, the sort possession must have slaked as certainly as removal now withered it : or whether her scorn had seared it out of me, such as it was : or whether, more like, the shock of Paradise's act had jerked me from boy into man—these riddles are not worth pondering now, nor then much vexed me. I'd desired her, with that young frenzy which can wound as sorely as any, even though it not endure ; now I woke as from some tormenting dream to find myself whole again. What smarted still was the

duplicity of Paradise—for I'd idolised that old treacher ; but of her I thought without bitterness ; let her bed anywhere, I wished her well or at least did not wish her any ill, however she'd used me. That flame had blazed and burned me, and now gone out : nor left no residue but a sour stink which lingered hurtfully in my mind's nostrils—the memory of the man I had loved.

This new-won peace, then, is what I still best recall from my first month at Lindale. Maybe it came slower . . . yet peace it was, compared with what I'd endured. It lulled even my suspense for Yottenfews ; for that was lost, unless recovered by my uncle in whose activity I'd no share ; and I was happier working here for strangers meanwhile, than outlawed on Calder-side. Nor did they bide strangers ; with John for tutor, I was soon fairly tangled in the interest of my new trade ; from sharing work we proceeded to sharing leisure, and my first visit at his father's house led to more. I'd have held off ; but having no acquaintance thereabouts, I could not. So before long I found myself in a worse fix than I ever anticipated, when my uncle first broached his plan.

I agreed to it only, as you know, in the wormwood of losing home and Barbara and Paradise all together ; so that I thought, if perfidy was universal against me, I must cheat with the rest. But in the peace of Cartmel I repented this enterprise ; and now John's comradeship, and the hospitality of his family, were disgusting me of it quite. Still, certain reasons helped me to keep conscience at arm's length for awhile. I was restricted to the foundry, not put to coke-making, nor sent inside where it was done ; and when John said in casual talk, that he'd complete my training if the Lord lent him patience, I forestalled him by vowing I'd not yet learned furnace-craft and must master one job at a time. Then, I expected day by day to hear some stranger had Yottenfews ; which if it happened would discharge me of my uncle and his machinations, for good ; and I should either leave here and start afresh—maybe in the Americas?—or as John hoped, join the Wilkinsons . . . Yet all this was only putting off my conscience, at best. And the more our acquaintance grew, the more profoundly did that Quaker home confirm what my father taught me : that there's no happiness except for those that can abide to stare their soul in the face ; without which neither health nor wealth, independence nor quietude, blind trust in God nor a frank turning of one's back on Him,

bring a man comfort. In Isaac's house (as at home while my father lived) I found a communal liberty, a nakedheartedness which neither pried nor concealed ; so that deceits, if any had practised them, would have seemed stupidity more than sin. When guests came, or unexpected travellers, these shared what there was without fuss ; and if their mission were to Isaac, they'd be told yea or nay when he had considered it, and the thing ended. Among themselves the members of the family were like brethren—though you'd not doubt who their head was ; and their servants, humanely ruled, were given a courtesy which they paid back in respect . . . It was this minded me of home, more than anything. At Eldon's, belowstairs was a separate world : here, no such barrier ; yet if my father and the Wilkinsons fared plainer than Egremont, they were better served.

Quakers (I found) accord their womenfolk a level treatment with men. Barbara had sometimes used to boast to me of the emancipation of women : how man's dominion was outmoded, and an equality of sex on its way : and how *she* aspired to act as she thought best, and tell fibs to keep her in countenance . . . Little Faith was a mouse, by her ; but I soon saw which had more freedom. Faith came and went about the neighbourhood as she chose ; and if Isaac asked what she had been busy at, it was in love, not mistrust. Often when John had brought me in, she'd join us beneath the mulberry, and bide five minutes or an hour according as she was minded. Or if I came alone she'd do likewise, making no guest of me : her mother or Isaac sometimes there as well, sometimes not. She was neither thrust on me nor withheld from me ; and before long, from our acquaintance which had started in Egremont, we two slipped into friends.

For one thing—loving John herself, and seeing my love of him—she was drawn to confide in me a rift between his father and him : which (she said) started from their difference about the guns, and which she feared was not ended. For already John talked of branching out elsewhere, with ships or fire-engines or bridges, even if not with guns ; while Isaac said, they were as well off here as any family needed to be, and why split the business ? But whatever they argued on (Faith feared) they'd split eventually, they were both so strong-willed.

And then we had another link, that Faith knew Egremont and, less well, our lands round Calder ; and she soon guessed

(what I'd not told even John) that though I was active in their work and likely finished with sheepfarming, I had a homesickness for the small daily businesses of Yottenfews, and longed to know how they sped. For I mind one late-afternoon—John and her father angling in Lindale beck, and her mother occupied—she began asking what-like was our country past Calderbrig, in the bosom of those great hills ; for above the bridge she'd not ventured. I told her of Thornholm, and our pastures there, and the intake where two valleys joined : and how in a few weeks the clip and Shepherds' Meeting were imminent, which I'd never missed till now. By and by Mistress Wilkinson came out, being finished withindoors ; and hearing us talk sheep, said laughingly that the first introduction she got to a sheep was its wool on her distaff ; for she was town-bred. " Not but what I've caught myself stopping off to wonder sometimes—eh yes, there's idleness !—what processes fetched it here. Thou must tell, Nicky ! "

So I gave them our clip. . . .

First, gathering-day when the lads start off up the fell at dawn and spread fanwise : their dogs at heel, till the word comes for them to range away and collect the sheep to fixed spots. The dogs know these spots, and often they'll not be seen for a half-hour on end while the farthest stragglers are gathered : the shepherd expecting them. After which each lad counts his lot, and fetches them down slowly.

" And what time will this be ? " Faith's mother asked.

" July early, or thereabouts. Shorn ewes take cold, if it's over windy, or wet ; so the weather rules it. But if we wait too long, their wool spoils through heating—they've a gey load to bear. And if it's hot we have to get them off the fell by noon, for tired flocks drive heavy ; they're best handled cool, and unfed."

" So they come down to—Thornholm, is it ? " says Faith.

" Aye, down Worm gill and Calder gill, to the intake where these unite : two long slow rivers of sheep. And they bide there till morning ; quiet, they bide—if you slip outdoors after dark, you'd not know they were there for any sound that they make ; only the dale feels different. All that great waiting multitude, not seen : and a whiff of tar on the wind."

" And next day ? " says Faith, big-eyed.

" At dawn we start clipping : by drafts—for there's a precedence ; hoggs, rams, wethers, lastly the old ewes—our

neighbours helping, as we help them when their clip comes ; we've three thousand at Yottenfews . . . sheep I mean, not neighbours " I put in, seeing Faith smile ; " our neighbours are a bare dozen ! Say fifteen hundred to be clipped : but a good man will clip his seventy a day ; so between their chaps, and our own lot and Will and me, we're done by supper."

" D'you work outdoors ? " Faith inquired.

" If it's fine, aye, under the sycamores : or in Thornholm barn if it dizzles. On a stool each—a bench, I ought to say—the sheep in front of you, with her head in your left armpit."

" Now there's one thing beats me " says Mistress Wilkinson ; " say you've a blustery day, doesn't the wool scatter ? "

So I must tell them, sheep are not clipped humanwise, but the fleece comes off whole. As it falls from the shears, it changes from gray to ivory and from ivory to snow-white ; while the girls ply between the stools and pick up the fleeces, folding them like overcoats, and tie and stack them for baling. So the job goes on, hour by hour : all thrang, except the dogs that lie sleeping off yesterday : with a tar-oil smell everywhere, and a thin smoke from under the smit-cauldron : and nobody talking much : and the sheep quiet too.

" Aye, verily ! " Faith's mother nodded. " As a sheep before her shearers is dumb—that's in Scripture. But thou'd think they'd cry out."

" Oh, they make clack enough once they're finished ! While their back's turned, we've the lambs to be smitting and lug-marking—ours are cropped nar, under-keybitted far——"

" What on earth's that ? " Faith cried.

" One ear-tip cropped, and a square nick cut in the other : with a red stroke of smit on the right shoulder—we don't clip them, first year. And a fine hey-bey they set up, when the two lots are done and they're turned loose to sort themselves out ; for the lambs won't own their clipped mothers——"

" Eh, the poor beasts ! "

" But the ewes know *them* ? " questioned Faith.

" Not surely. I reckon they all smell alike from the tar and grease in the smit. So the first thing the ewes do when they've found their own is to nuzzle them till they're certain ; and then they'll press them jealously under their bellies for a suck of the

milk. There's mother-love for you, Mistress Wilkinson ! If you knew what the stink of tar and rudd can be, and the bloody mess of their ears, you'd applaud. It may take 'em an hour to get paired off ; but they manage it the end, and the baaing stops, and you know both sides are contented."

"Aren't you all weary then ?" Faith asked.

"Oh, your hand's fit for nothing but to lay it flat on a stone ; but the ache passes. The girls set wash-tubs on the stools for the menfolk to clean themselves. Then they're bid in—the master standing at the head of the board—and take meat together : powsoddy and taty-pot, and cheese with haverbread, and tobacco pipes handed round. And the head-shepherd's ridden on a stool for the Song, and at dusk Geordie Fiddler comes to play for us, and we're dancing. When that's done, the guests start home ; but next day we others take our multitude on the fells again—milkwhite they show, in the green bracken : and as dainty-footed as mountebanks, so much their load's been reduced. . . ."

It was twilight before they let me stop. Awhile back we'd heard the gate-latch click, and John and Isaac crossed the lawn with their angle rods, peering towards our voices ; when they'd found us they stood quiet, listening, black against the faint sky. Presently John said, half-serious :

"There'll be machines for every mortal job some day, Nicky : why not for barberin' sheep ? When thou's reinstated, we mun have one on—what's this river ? Calder, aye—to un-whisker the lot !"

"Nay, for shame !" Faith laughed.

Said I : "Find first a machine for reinstating me ; that's harder than clipping sheep——"

Isaac spoke from the dusk : "Happen the Lord'll put His mind to that, while our John's draftin' his clipper . . . What's to eat, wife ?"

So we went in. But at prayers ere I left, Isaac read for us in his deep strong voice a passage out of Isaiah :

Behold, the days come that all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon : nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away. All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field ; the grass

withereth, the flower fadeth ; but the word of our God shall stand for ever——

and then triumphantly :

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain ! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him ; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd ; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Faith's eyes were on me while he read—and mine filled with tears ; I knew the old words well enough, but he gave them life. I took heart, that evening. As he closed the great book, I could smell bracken on Kinniside and hear the wind in the grasses.

XXXII

ON THE last day of June, Faith and her mother planned to ride to Lancaster for a visit ; and because I was easier spared than John, Isaac bade me enjoy a holiday to squire them across the bay.

You'll recall, hereabouts they use the sands for a highway at slack water : from Sand Gate towards Ulverston about two mile, or the same east from Grange ; or you may strike south-east, eight mile direct as you can ride, to Hest Bank for Lancaster ; no danger anywhere, provided that you observe the tides and allow due time for your journey.

We left at nine, and were halfway almost before the tide turned : the coast now parallel a mile away, and the sea hardly visible : a grand ride for a June morning, and strange to me, used to our straight shore. For the great bay so curves, that almost wherever you turn your eyes you see fells hemming you : first the wide sands, and beyond those a wider ring of tumbled

hills, dark green and emerald and buff and blue, with cloud-shadows ambling : and between shore and hills a hazy vapour which the sun's heat engenders, stretching its long veil, so that the inner lands seem to swim on it. But now and then, when you descend some little unexpected dip that a beck's outflow has channelled, you are cut off suddenly from this landskip, and can see nothing nearer than its blue-jagged distances ; and the silence exceeds belief.

Before eleven we reached Hest Bank, and soon Lancaster : but here met a snag. Faith's aunt (whom they meant visiting) ran out when she heard us in the yard and told us, with tears, her little Isaac was struck down of an epidemic-fever ; and though he'd now passed the worst, she'd been so moidered these two days that she'd lacked time to prevent us.

" Well " says Faith's mother while we stood holding our beasts in dismay, " I mun bide and help thee, that's certain ! But I reckon Faith should go back——" this sickness being easy caught. " Hath he been bled ? "

" Nay, we——"

" Thou's right. It's a daft business, draining a bairn's strength ! Now then, you two——" She gave us our orders ; a grand senseful body she was, never at a loss. She would stop here and lend a hand ; but let Faith and me (she said) turn back the road we had come, when the tide suffered us ; in about two hours we could start, and be home before darkness. " Rest and eat—Nicky, find some decent place—ask at Hest Bank and make sure the tide's right for you. If ye're in doubt, keep close inland ; there's naught but sea-mist can bother you, and ye've sense enough to watch that. By half-past-one ye should be away—don't linger sightseeing, mind. So God with you ! " And she bundled us off.

This was a new job for me, to have charge of Faith ; but it pleased us both very well. In the town we ate leisurely, and rested, and observed the citadel from a distance—soldiers in front of it on guard, for it was crammed with Jacobites that had been sent here from Carlisle. Faith would have had us climb the hill to it, but with her mother's words in mind I forbade. " Why, Nicky " says she, " we've time ! The sea won't turn back before its proper hour, even for thy lordship——" But I said, I'd her folk to answer to, and if we both got drowned on the way home, I'd be hard-set to make excuses. She had the laugh of me, however, when we reached Hest Bank and the tide

was barely off the soft sand. The fishermen told us we must stop an hour at least, or fetch a long circuit ; if we stopped two, we'd still make Grange at a walk. So we went on a little, by the shore, and hitched our animals to an old bleached capstan there was, and sat down where we could look across the bay towards Walney Point fifteen miles off. The fells there run out in a flat spit, with the Peel tower for beacon : and beyond, blue and very far away, Black Combe dividing all this Furness territory from the country that I knew. By and by Faith asked quietly :

"Thou'rt happy in Lindale, Nick?"

"No fault of you folks if not."

She nodded. "We've wished thee happy. John says——"

"Aye : too much, for my peace . . . I've not told John yet : I'm leaving you."

I doubted if she had heard. For awhile she sat turned from me, staring across the bay. But at last : "Why, Nick?" says she.

"No matter why. I should never have come here."

"Is it—old friends pulling thee?" she asked in a queer dead voice, unlike herself.

"Friends ! Friends aren't what they're cracked up to be. It'll not be for friends' sake, if ever I see home again."

"Yet thou hast friends there."

"My father ; and he's dead. And one beside, whom I'd made sure of, as I thought ; but I deceived myself. And a third—whom I'd hoped——"

She said nothing.

"But I lost my hope there, too."

"Thou'rt bitter, Nick."

"I was. Not now—that's one thing Lindale's unlearned me."

Suddenly she broke out : "She was not thy sort—ah, never thy sort, never !"

"You knew, then" said I.

"I'd—heard tell."

"Well, that's done with, at least."

We remained silent for awhile. The tide began to draw away from the ribbed sands, leaving broad stretches. Cartmel danced in the sun. Our beasts cropped, tugging at the gray sea-grass that grew round the capstan. Faith sat with her chin in one brown hand, looking steadfastly towards Lindale. But what I watched was the long hogsback of Black Combe on the horizon :

familiar, though here reversed. "They'll be clipping, this week——" said I.

She turned. "*That's* not lost yet!"

"It's lost more certainly than all the rest put together."

"Thou's heard——?" She caught her breath.

"Nothing. But it's lost all the same."

"I don't follow——"

"Nay, how should you: little *you* know!"

She said, with a touch of her father's bluntness: "I know as much as thou thinks fit to tell—or at least not much more!" she added, softening the rebuke with a smile. "But that's thy fault, isn't it?"

And at first I refused to answer. But soon, disarmed by her goodnature and ashamed of my moodiness: "O Faith" said I, "*we* don't need secrets—and you've seen through mine long ago. But you're right, she and I weren't suited; when I most longed for her, sometimes I doubted if I loved or hated her more."

"And now, Nicky?"

"I've learned truth here—about that, and other things."

"She was very lovely" Faith murmured.

"Aye, of the body; but what's *that* worth, if——"

"What, indeed——!"

I said: "I'd resolved when I left home, that neither she nor any other friend was worth Yottenfews: not even him I've just spoken of, though he was worth ten of *her*. Let friends and all go hang, thought I, if Yottenfews could be saved!"

"Thou was wrong" she said firmly.

"Was I? Tell me, then . . . for I think you're wiser than I."

"Wrong——" says she, nodding to herself, "the same way those holy-men were wrong who used to take to the desert——"

"Holy-men——?" And while I wondered why she should compare me with them, Faith went on quickly:

"They let *their* friends and all go hang: and kindness: and the jobs they'd far better have been busy at—they renounced them because they reckoned there was nothing worth their while, outside Heaven."

"I want no heaven if not Yottenfews, neither!" said I.

"Oh, it's rare—I've seen that! But suppose thy job's ordered in some other valley, or country?"

"Over-seas?"

"Anywhere: and thou brings to it a dead heart, no human-kindness, thy thoughts backward on Yottenfews—as the old

hermits' thoughts were fixed ahead on a Heaven as remote? O Nicky, there's loss indeed!" Now she was flushed, and her brown eyes fixed on me, timid, yet resolute to hold me and say her say, whatever I thought: so earnest she was, bless her. . . . "Can thou not see, thy dead heart and a job done grudgingly are but waste? Thy life's thy own to make or spoil: with new friends, in some new world outside Yottenfews . . . thou'rt cross with me, Nick?"

I shook my head. "Six weeks back, I'd have told thee flat thou was wrong; but now—nay, not cross, nor doubtful! For thy words nudge me farther yet on a road I've no choice but go."

"The road to leave us?"

"Maybe."

"I'd wish them unspoke, then," she sighed.

"What fetched me to Lindale, Faith?"

She looked at me, puzzled. "Why, to learn iron, as I suppose."

"What's iron to me! I'm a sheepfarmer."

"I pray God, thou'll yet farm Yottenfews."

"Not in this world——" I rose; and smiling at her, giving her my hands to get up: "In heaven, eh? In that elusive heaven of thine, which belongs either yesterday or to-morrow: not here. . . . Come, the tide's off the hard sand now; we must ride back——"

So we made home across the bay, not saying much, each in our thoughts: hers not guessed by me—long after, she told me them—mine sad, yet lit by two certainties where before they'd been dark. For I knew first that my design of cheating Isaac Wilkinson was done with for good and all, though I lost Yottenfews: and second (blind as I had been to it, till this day) that whatever befell me now, whether I stopped here or roamed elsewhere, whether I made iron or farmed sheep, Faith alone was the lass for me in this queer uneasy world; whom I must win, or bide lonely.

XXXIII

WE WERE on Grange beach before five o'clock, within two miles of home: the tide still far out. As we climbed off the shore I stole a side-look at Faith, and saw her face pale and troubled. Then I remembered we'd come five hours fasting, from Lan-

caster ; and though I'd found that ride too short, I feared lest I'd overtaxed her. So at a cottage with an orchard adjoining it, where a bench showed between trees, I made her get down and eat. Fresh butter with haverbread, the woman brought out to us, and a conserve of damsons which in Cartmel grow so abundantly as nowhere else in the land : and tea, unasked—for here at any rate the smugglers were hardly checked, and tea plentiful. I might have remembered tea myself : the brandy of women-folk, old Paradise used to assure me . . . Anyhow we were brought it, and I saw how it did Faith good.

“ So, home ? ” she sighed.

I told her, since they didn't look for her returning at all, a half-hour could make no odds. “ Nay lass, don't stint me it ! ” I entreated. “ There's a something I've got to say——”

“ I'm in *thy* charge, Nicky ! ”

I began : “ Faith, you asked why I'd made this resolve to leave Lindale ; and I wouldn't tell.”

“ Nor why thou came at first ” said she.

“ The two march together——” I durst not meet her frank eyes. “ I came to steal your father's secret of coke-making ; and I go, finding I can't do it. . . . I would not have told you this ; but I must.” She made no sound ; her brown hands lay beneath my eyes on the table, and did not stir. “ My uncle promises to save Yottenfews, if we pay bribes enough. He has dipped deeper in his purse than trade warrants. If I'd fetched home your trick, he'd have recouped himself, set Bigrigg on its feet again—and regained me my heritage. Now, that cannot be. . . .”

She was silent so long, her fingers so motionless, at last I raised my eyes to meet hers—piteous I found them, filled with tears, and her cheeks white. “ O Nick, didst *thou* conceive such a treachery ! ”

“ I consented with it, at least. Oh, not soon—it seemed too ugly a price, even for Yottenfews. But later—as things fell out for me, and treachery grew the fashion—I agreed, and came here.”

“ And next—— ? ”

“ You should best know ! Where I'd looked for distrust, preventions, craft to match my own craft against—nothing but kindness. John first, then Isaac : they showed me something I'd been too self-occupied to perceive—or too self-pitiful. And now you. O Faith, if you'd guessed how you wrung me when you bade me prize no place on earth above kindness ! You've

learned me the loveliness of human-kindness, in Lindale ! Though it end here, for me—though it's cost Yottenfews—I'll bless it all my life long."

"It does not end" she said quietly.

"I doubt it does . . . so if to-night's good-bye, my dear, at least I've made bold to thank thee."

"To-night ? Thou'll not go to-night !"

"When I've told Isaac what—what thou's been told."

"Ah Nick, if only I could——"

"Nay, it's my burden ; but I'll be eased of it. And for what's next—who cares ?"

"Who cares——!" she echoed, below her breath. . . . When she was mounted and I stood by her on the road, she said : "Thou'rt not coming presently ?"

"To-night, when he's home."

"Shall I say——"

"Nothing. Ask him, can we be private."

She leaned towards me ; her hand touched my cheek. "God with thee——" she sighed, "——my dear !"

"What, Nick, thou's brought up a long fiddle-face with thee to-night, and no mistake !" laughed Isaac, pulling me in. "Am I to guess thy errand ?"

"I hope not, Isaac" said I. But when we were closeted, ere I found words, he prevented me :

"So thou'd more company nor thou bargained for, comin' back ! Faith tells, in thy anxiety not to drown thyself, thou wouldn't give her a half-peep at Lancaster for all her entreaties—and then reached Hest Bank at flood !"

"Her mother charged us——"

"Aye, aye. Thou's a good lad . . . and then says Faith, when I asked did thou fetch her by Grange ford or through the Eea, 'I don't remember,' says she. And I says : 'What, then thou'd thy mind fairly occupied !' And the li'le lass blushed, and said nowt."

"It's not Faith I'm come about."

He gave me a sharp look. "Eh ? What, then ?"

"Something—gey hard to break to you."

He said quietly : "Thou's sure thou wants to break it, friend ? Some tangles looses out themselves, if they're let."

"Not this one" said I.

So then I told him.

He heard me out, saying nothing. His keen eyes dwelt on me steadfastly ; but they showed neither anger nor surprise, nor any hint of his thoughts. When I ended he asked, as Faith had asked : " And was this Eldon Fleming's enterprise or thine, which ? "

" Mine " said I. " I came of my free will."

" Thou's a middlin' poor liar, Nick " he said gently. " Yet go on. Thou came here with an intent, and thou's turned back—thou's been turned back. Why ? "

" Oh " I cried, " never trouble why ! Put it, I'd no choice——"

He nodded : " Aye, aye : for the Voice spoke in thee, and thou'd got to obey ; thou's not the first lad that's happened to—nor the first who's been sent to learn our trick ! " he added ; and at his words, it came to me that he'd perceived my wickedness from the start. " But the rest were less honest ; if the Voice spoke, they stopped their ears."

" So you knew why I came ? " said I.

" Surely. Say Eldon wished thee to learn iron, he'd his own works ; they make as good stuff as we. Only, with pit-coal beneath his very feet, our secret would profit him . . . he dealt shrewdly, thy uncle : usin' Jethro for agent, and a go-between to get at Jethro for him. He deceived Jethro proper."

" But if not you——"

Isaac stroked his great beard. " It's six-and-twenty year " said he " since I begun iron ; and a few more nor that since I begun to size folks up. When I made thy acquaintance, Nick, and saw what-like thou was, the Lord spoke in me. ' Isaac ' says He, ' thou'll give the Voice its chance with this lad however ! ' ' Eh Lord ' says I, ' Thou's not forgettin' I've my own bairns' interest to watch ? ' ' Shut thy gob, Isaac, now ! ' says He, ' thou's heard what I'm tellin' thee——' The Lord kenned best, eh ? "

But I could not speak.

His hand fell on my shoulder. " What's this Faith says, thou's leavin' us ? Nay, she'd tell nothin' more ; it was accident she let that out."

" How can I bide ! "

" Thou's apprenticed to me, thou's got to bide if I elect " he said gruffly. " Still, thou may choose. If iron's thy job, thou can go back to Bigrigg and thy uncle—thou's worth his money, never fear ; and whether thou tells him why thou's back or not,

is thy own business. Or stop with us—that's what John wants—and be learned the whole of our trade ; it's a free choice. But stop or go, there's a thing thou and I mun first settle—I reckoned that was what thou came to ask me to-night ; and I tell thee, if thou *had* asked me and not opened out this other affair, I'd have given thee a back-answer ! Yet I knew well, thou'd open it in the Lord's fulness of time ; I'd His affidavit for that. . . . It's Faith, I'm speakin' of."

I stared. "Faith——?"

"The lass pines for thee. I've seen, many a day . . . Has thou made love to her?"

"O Isaac, for very shame I'd not dare!"

"Aye, aye : but from now out, that's cured ; unless——"

I said : "I love Faith with all my heart." And suddenly he fell into one of his deep laughers.

"Tell *her* that, not me, thou fool!" he cried ; and pushed me outdoors.

I found her beneath the mulberry tree ; and from that night began our great happiness . . .

I was mazed, all the ensuing week : like a lad in a dream.

With Barbara, I plunged over-head before I guessed what was happening ; and between her scorn and my desperation, and my fierce pride that Yottenfews must tug any woman's heart to be queen of it, those days had been one long fever ; which fever ending as abruptly, I could only bless my escape. But my true love for Faith had grown in me unperceived : my thoughts proöccupied, my future more than ever in doubt, my conscience intolerably charged with the villainy I had undertaken. Faith had been part of Lindale, merely : part of the welcome I found there, part of my self-reproach. Yet when the scales fell off my eyes at last (the day we rode home from Lancaster) it seemed not possible that I should ever have missed loving her since the beginning : and still less possible that Faith's heart should have turned to me, adrift and rudderless as I was ; and she so beyond my worth.

Out of my dazed memory of that week, two talks stick up : one with her, I'll tell presently ; and one with Isaac whom I asked what premium Eldon had paid. "For since I'm here at his expense, I'll refund it——"

"Who says thou's here at his expense?" growled Isaac. "Maybe he paid the premium out of thy pocket, not his—nay,

I've no knowledge ; Jethro Pardshaw could tell. But from my hearsay of him, I think Eldon's scrupulosity in money-affairs would keep your accounts separate ! ”

“ I believe him honest, however.”

Isaac laughed. “ What, he could easy argue with himself that the apprenticeship was *thy* charge—such honesty'd be right policy ! ” And then he told me of a judgment Jethro once passed to him, on my uncle : that for a straitly virtuous man, he knew not why, he disliked Eldon Fleming as prodigiously as any he'd met. “ And Jethro's charitable, mind ” added Isaac : “ not prone to judge harshly. Thou'd best let coiled snakes lie. . . .”

Faith's talk touched on Paradise.

She'd asked, one day towards the end of this same week, how my friend did : “ Thy stout friend, whom I saw with thee in Egremont ? I misremember his name——” Which fetched me up short ; for I'd tried to school myself to forgetfulness. Faith read my eyes. “ O Nicky ! Then it was *he*—with her ? ”

“ Let's not speak of that, little sweeting.”

“ But so strange ! He was Eldon's go-between, *he* asked Uncle Jethro . . . thou'd have gone to Salop, unless.”

“ He'd his reason for speeding me.”

“ O Nick ” says she, “ whatever his reason was, let's wish him nothing but well. For what he stole, thou's found thyself better off without ; and what he gave . . . If thou'd gone to Coalbrookdale ! ”

“ And missed thee ? But I'd have found thee some time, it was in both our stars ! ”

She said, smiling : “ Thou infidel, think rather that the Lord worked closely for us, through him ; for he set out to do thee a blind injury, and instead brought us this joy. . . .” And presently she confessed, there was a question she had burned to ask since first I told her my love ; only she'd feared——

“ To be bid mind thy own business, eh ? ” I teased her. “ Or worse, to get the wrong answer ? Let's hear it, all the same.”

“ I'm serious, Nicky ” says she.

“ Well, thy riddle ? ”

She looked at me steadily. “ Thou's told me, for a long while before thou changed thy mind against thy uncle's intrigue, thou continued in great uncertainty ; was it—was it *my* sake thou changed it for ? ”

“ O Faith——” said I, and fell silent. But at last : “ Thou's

found me out " I said, miserable. " I'd tell thee a pretty fib, if I dared . . . but in truth Isaac's kindness moved me so, I'd no peace ; I'd have owned up that night, though I'd not loved nor ever met thee at all. O my dear, don't count my love less for that, or I'll wish——"

But she laughed and wept and flung her arms round me. " O Nick " says she all in a breath, " I love thee, I love thee crazier even than I'd believed and—and thou has no sense ! "

Next evening Faith waited for me at the works-gate, her eyes eager. " Nick, come ! " she cried. " There's a post for thee—two packets, just in ! I'd have brought them, but feared missing thee. From home, I think——"

We fairly ran to the house ; and there Faith's mother expected us, with the packages in her hand. One was a letter inscribed to me in the writing of Mr. Paradise ; the other (from whom I could not tell) a newspaper stringed and sealed, to prevent the courier taking a read of it ; which I ripped open first. It was a copy of the *London Gazette* ; nothing to show the sender. But a short paragraph, scored heavily in ink by some unknown hand, caught my eye.

This informed any whom it might concern that the estate of Yottenfews in the county of Cumberland, attainted recently for its late owner's share in the revolt, was assigned henceforth by His Majesty to Mr. Eldon Fleming J.P. of Egremont in the said county, for services rendered.

XXXIV

[*Transcribed from the journal of Mr. Eugene
Paradise, Master of Arts : May-July, 1746.*]

May the 1st, Thursy.

This day back out of Man, by a bug-populated schooner to Whitehaven, in ballast with cock-roaches : but the voyage halcyon-fair. In Douglas, all settled after a week's bargaining, & the *percentum* of gain fix'd. Henceforth we trade both ways, wh. is sound economicks, to return our ship stuff'd not empty—aye & sound mathematicks too ; for (the crew needing no additional time to carry t' other load back) the ship is away as soon, wh. means 1 risk for 2 profits. Or so our *Princeps* makes

out ; whose judgment has never fail'd him yet, & I trust he's right now. The 2nd week of July, we propose ; on our part we can't be ready earlier, & the Moon's then convenient. The puzzle is rather on their side, to arrange the coincidence of a scape-goat. For the affair at Ravenglass has put the fear of death in all Manxmen ; who now swear by their Three Legs, having Cartmel & Solway to chuse among, they'll meddle with our coast no more.

But indeed this scape-goatherding disgusts me ; Nick touch'd me closer than he knew, when he burst out against that. I'd reform virtuous, I'd hang up spyglass & dark-lantern in Neptune's shrine, only they keep old age at bay. D——n me I will reform tho', shortly ; *video meliora proboque*—meanwhile, July holds good.

To-morrow early, to Yottenfews ; for I'm told Nick's been seeking me. What news my week's absence may have balk'd me of, I long yet tremble to learn.

May the 2nd, Friday.

Well, I've learn'd it. She's sprung the mine.

The lad meets me on Calderside, face to face. If it's true what they preach, that a man's torment here can mitigate his infernal damnatn., I think this morning shd. subtract a century or 2 from my score. He'd have torn my heart less, had he abus'd me ; but only " You'll find her waiting you " says he ; & then " You can ask yr.self what you are." And I must endure it dumb, or spoil everything—he was in full flight to Cartmel, even now.

I ought to have steel'd myself to go on & pass the day with her, confirming my vile success ; but this I cd. not. I turn'd presently, sneak'd after him, & watch'd him ride away down the shore. He never look'd back. It's 30 yr. since I shed tears for anyone or anything, Nicky my dear. But O God, what other way ?

May the 4th, Sunday.

I have told Balbus all the whole matter ; wh. I'd not meant, but 2 more days of such a purgatory as I'd not thought possible drove me to Thornholm. " Wheer's Nick ? " shouts he, running. " Cartmel " says I. " What t' hell for ? " says he. " Because I've stole his girl " says I ; & he stood thunderclapt. But at last : " Odds beecans an' breed ! " he swore, " thoo's done 'am a good

turn theer, an' no mistak'—but what, Ah'd hev thowt thoo'd mair sense . . ." But rot me, Will's speech can't be phonicked. "I'd have thought thou'd more sense" he said "at thy old time of life, nor to get thysel' tangle't with a——"

"Nay & I have" said I. "I've used sense for both of us. But O Will, I'm heartbroke for the lad these 3 days!"

So then I told him the truth : how I'd said all I durst & more to Nick, but found him infatuate beyond argument ; till at last, desperate, I'd beat down & grimly subjugate my antipathy, to besiege the lady myself—"Aye you may grin" said I. "But if you knew how I had sweat—with what toil, what resurrectn. of youth's gallantries, what industrious overnight preparatn. of wit ! I tell thee, Will, no devout lover ever rack'd himself to inveigle his heart's desire, as I to decoy that bitch. Not with sighs (she'd have only laugh'd) but with quips, subtile bawdries, scandals cull'd from the politer world for wh. she intends herself, innuendoes to set her blushing : & beside these, some friendly-doleful prophecies that Nick's lands were gone for ever ; or if not, that sheep wd. still usurp his best love. O, it's been up-hill work !"

"Thou's mannished, though ?" put in Will.

"Aye, till my diligence in captivatn. wears out, or she tires of it : by when, let's hope, he'll be cured. Maybe his cure's in Cartmel . . ."

For in Cartmel (thought I) there's Pardshaw's little gray maid : not Pardshaw's after all, but a Wilkinson. It was when I'd learn'd this that I persuaded Uncle E. to put Nick to Cartmel, not Salop : offering to sponsor him, thro' Pardshaw, so that E.'s plot need not appear. The lass dotes on him, I've detected. If he must mate (as I misdoubt he must) why, she's the very nymph for him ; & she'll not lose time, for she has a will in her, demure little dove as she is. But no need to break this to Balbus yet : who thinks nowt (he doggedly asseverates) of the whole sex.

"Well" says he when we had talked awhile, "thy contrivery's done *me* no good ! T' wife says, she'll not stop where she's not wantit ; nor she'll not serve no intertruders neether, now our Nick's off. Eldon's fetch't in yon black-browed valet feller o' his to lodge, out o' Gosforth—and now t' wife threats she'll come *here* !"

"Thou can put up with that for Nick's sake, Balbus" I told him. "My cross is heavier than thine."

June the 8th, Sunday.

I groan like the psalmist : " Lord, how long—— ? " 5 weeks & 2 days, since the dear lad rode off. I'd hoped, she'd have nauseated of me by now ; but my fatal fascinatin. continues. The one alleviatn. is, my schoolwork limits me to week-ends. Then, I'm her tame parrot : no more snuff, she stipulates ; French scents to outstink myself ; my clothes refurbish'd to ride with her, or to walk her to church (for we're all churchgoers here, I think her father'd drive the sheep to church if he cd.) & now d——n me I must provide myself of a periwig. Balbus mocks my extremity. " What " says he, " thou's doin' fine ! I seed ye at kirk togither—drest up like all the lilies of the rainbow, thou was. By gox she'll marry thee yet ! " But I begin to fancy, Nick's clear ; she scarce mentions him ; this day she told me, with an unfeigned indifference, what finally helped them split. " Wd. you believe " says she, " he thought I'd poison'd his dog ! " " And had you ? " said I. " Lud, no ! " she scorned : " the brute was gone, I neither knew or cared by what means ; only, to vex him, I let him suppose me its murderess." And said I, diligent still in calumny : " You couldn't have vex'd him deeper ; in the homes of these country-squires, you know, the masters eat the crumbs that fall from the dogs' table——" Whereat the fool laugh'd till I itched to reverse her across my knee.

June the 11th, Wedy.

I horribly suspect, my lads at school have smelt out that I go courting. O Venus & Mercury, what deeper ignominies must I endure ?

June the 15th, Sunday.

This evg. sneak'd up to Thornholm (after some glib excuse to my lady & her papa) where I found Balbus in no mocking-humour, but phrantick : & his Hannah grim.

" Dost'a know what yon —— Fleming's order't us ? " he burst out at me. " The —— ——, the —— —— —— ! "

" Whisht for shame " Hannah says. " Sek talk, on Sunday an' all ! "

If I knew, I kept mum ; for I saw he would ease himself by instructing me.

" We've to clip, nex' week ! " he pursued. " Too soon, by a fortnight ! And where, thinks thou ? *Where ?* "

"Why, here at Thornholm I suppose" said I, innocent ;
 "where else shd. your clip be?"

"On t' shore, min! Down on t' shore we've to clip them,
 nigh yon old barn he's fettle't up! Five extra mile to drive the
 —s, each way!"

"Well, his reason?"

"Reason! Whativver reason cd. he have, tirin' t' poor
 beasts out? Dam' rantin' foolishness! But 'them's my
 instructns.' says he!"

I took a $\frac{1}{2}$ hr. to cool him.

Even then, he continued marvellous low. "Thou knows"
 he said, "yon meddler's made other mischief since Nick went
 —tho' none so daft as this. Nick tell't me to keep peace ('It's
 our one hope, says he) an' whativver t' Law says, while Nick's
 above ground an' I'm head-shepherd at Yottenfews, Nick's the
 Maister. But our folk's grummelin'—" He looked steady at
 me. "Who farms this place, Mr. Paradise, would ye say?"

"Why you, Will!"

He shook his head. "Summat, I do. Without me, maybe
 we'd have come to grief this spring; or maybe we'd not. But
 there's more till't nor that, as I warn't Eldon Fleming when he
 give me the clip-order. 'Mr. Fleming' says I, 'can thou not
 see, it's neether me nor thee nor Mr. Nicholas mannishes
 Yottenfews, but the *folk*! Thou'll crack our harmony, with sek
 changes.' 'You think so?' says he. 'I know dam' well' says I.
 'Then know this' says he, 'Mister Rothery. I'm in charge here
 while Master Nicholas is away—maybe longer; & if yr. shep-
 herds can't abide my rule without their harmony being cracked,
 I'll find some less brittle.' And says I: 'God help thee, Mr.
 Fleming, thou knows nowt about shepherds, I tell thee with all
 respect; but my word's pledged till t' Maister, & I'll keep thy
 peace while I can.' 'I'm glad' says he 'you're so sensible.'
 'One on us has to be!' I tell't him; & with that he bid me
 good-day."

June the 16th, Mony.

To-day I've been pondering Will's words, wh. I wrote terser
 yest'dy than I cd. have wish'd (for by dusk I must needs slink
 back to *her* & jump thro' my hoops, till bed) & especially 2 more
 remarks of his, not yet enter'd.

Item: "I doubt" said he "we're nobbut 2 old bunglin'
 blabberskites, thou & I, stoppin' this match o' Nicky's? 'T'

lad's folly might have chose a likelier father-in-law nor our cleverness ; for mark my word, Mr. Paradise, yon black crow'll nivver rest till he's got Yottenfews in his own lawful hands ! ” And in truth, I've nursed the same fear.

Have I meddled rashly ? Maybe poor Nick cd. have remarried his estate, with her ? But lord, a farm with such live-stock ! I wd. not have him pay so fearful a price, not even for Yottenfews : not for the cattle upon a 1000 hills !

Item : Bidding me good-night, Will said heavily : “ It was a black day for all here, when t' Maister rode to the wars ! ” “ I believe so, indeed ” said I, staggered—for in 6 months of friendship, I'd not known Will drop a word wh. cd. seem to criticise that dead name ; & I think the dear fellow chid himself of a disloyalty, even now ; for staring me in the eye, “ Eh well, *that's* past our remedy ! ” says he ; & so left me.

Now I wonder, as I've done many a 100 times, what like of man was John Fleming ? Rebel ? Aye. Villain ? Aye categorically, if you count all rebels as such. Adventurer, gambler ? Aye : & culpable past forgiveness, when you think how he's left Nick ; I'll confess, till I grew into Yottenfews & learn'd the soul of the place, Nick's orphan'd lot made me hate this dead father with a bitterness I cd. scarce dissemble. Yet now (partly thro' Nick's proud love & worship, partly thro' Balbus & the rest) that harsh image alters. No selfish gambler in the happiness of others cd. have left the legend he has. For the man's spirit haunts here, you meet it at every turn, wherever anyone speaks of him : gay, generous, kindly. “ T' Maister said—— ” they tell, with love in their eyes. Master did this or that, cleverer than anyone. Master helped, Master saved. And oftenest of all : “ Eh dear, Maister would have laugh'd—— ! ” He laughed at most things, I fancy ; certainly at brother Eldon, whose lifelong hatred is a testimonial I rate high. And to-day still his mellow presence seems to linger about the place like an after-glow, & men to bask in it, tho' his sun's set : past remedy, as Will grieved.

But O, what caprice lured him off to fight on either side—let alone chuse wrong, & get kill'd at it ? “ Nowt so queer as folk ! ” Will is used to say : wh. I endorse heartily. Some dreamer-element, I surmise—young Nick's a dreamer : aye & Eldon too, in his fashion—some jack-o'-lantern in the soul, from wh. we earthier ones live secure . . . but I grow fantastical.

Hey, the truth is I shd. have writ this page last night, at

Yottenfews, where one goes sober to rest : not here where (after my laborious & parch'd week-end) Bacchus now mingling with my midnight oil flares up in diaristick hyperbole.

Paradise, thou art drunk.

Set that down also in thy book, my old sottish friend : & to bed.

June the 21st, Satdy.

Last night approaching from the sea, I admired like the prophet Samuel : " What means this bleating of sheep in mine ears ? " Then I remember'd, we were due to clip to-morrow at Eldon's barn by the water-edge. They'd been fetch'd down, & were now penn'd here multitudinous, in this $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of scrubby waste between beach & Yottenfews where man nor brute never comes. So in twilight leading my horse, with many a by-yr.-leave, I made my way towards the house ; while the poor fools fled me, rattling.

To-day all afternoon we've watched the clippers at work—wondrous deft they are, shearing off the woolly mat in less time than you'd write of it : with neighbours helping 'em, for we're all members one of another in these parts. And a sweet posy of Phoebes & Phyllises from C'brig. (O, they put Eldon's wench to shame, I thought, for all her white loveliness !) trussing the fleeces into bundles, neat, to be stack'd in Eldon's great barn. My lady with me, & a young spark who's come here as my fellow-guest this week-end. Eldon meanwhile (my father-in-law, as Will has now begun calling him) prowling like some gaunt wolf among the usurp'd sheep. The shepherds gloomily silent.

My co-guest (whose name I have already forgot, but no matter) is an ensign of foot in the line-regt. now at Cockermouth. He'd provided himself of a pr. of sheep's-eyes from the adjacent flock to admire Barbara, & I think wished me away. But I've stuck close, redoubling my exhausted charms in the hope of whetting his jealousy : B. so kind to me all day, that I guess she'd spur him too. Never have I so glitter'd ; yet a great part of it was labour-lost—B. preoccupied with him for all her feign'd indifference, & the young spark too much a vandal to appreciate polite wit. As *item*, one quip wh. my vanity must record. She'd exclaimed at the shepherd-dogs, spectators of this day's business on the beach, a long row of 'em. " Why yes " I flashed, "*stant litore puppes*—only they're sitting down ! "

My jest misfir'd of them both. But Eldon, overhearing,

laugh'd suddenly ; I console myself, to make Eldon Fleming laugh is a feat any wag might be proud of.

June the 22nd, Sunday.

All at church, duly edified : but myself most, to spy how hardly our young ensign stay'd the ordeal (these warrior-heads have not the intellectual furniture to beguile tedium). Now after dinner she's gone walking with him, up-stream : Eldon not pleased, but suffering her—he'll have a hand-full of that dr. of his, when she does chuse. Myself prodigiously content with this unforeseen respite, at leisure beneath the great sycamore : " every man under his fig tree," as the hopeful prophet commends.

But, whose fig tree ? Eldon's, or Nick's ? Here's something gives me uneasiness. While Nick remain'd, methought her father turn'd an indulgent eye on their going about together ; & at 1st when he'd left, I remark'd Eldon often dropt a word to her, in his praises. Now, we don't mention him. Whence I infer, that poor Nick who might have been a pretty match (if he came back home with the title to Yottenfews, & this iron-secret as well ?) is now quite price-fallen ; & what *that* signifies, I mistrust.

June the 29th, Sunday.

O Juppiter, I smell dawn ! This week-end, young Mars has been here again—& now I think of it, his name's Clute. Chas. Clute : wh. is as silly a name as you'd find in a long journey ; but no doubt he thinks the same about mine. He don't like *me* much ; but I vow I delight in him altogether, the more I review his parts : a brisk smart lusty hardswearing godless young popinjay, with the reversion of a little fortune moreover (2000 l., says she.) By noon he'd rode off, partly to elude church, partly being needed with his Company (for sometimes they work) & left her mopish. Later she comes to me & asks me to walk her on the shore, it's so romantick, she sighs.

And soon all is out. I find, he's cast his hook in her with a vengeance. After some roundabout (she making sure I've seen what is in the wind, to save explaining herself) she lifts a plausible face. " O Eugene, I've used you shamefully " says she ; " you'll forgive me, I hope ! "

" Why my dear " said I fatherly, but in secret jumping for joy, " I'm too old for you, I know that ; if I've forgot it once or twice, heigho, the more fool I ! "

"O, you're magnanimous—& wise " she cajoles me. "Guide me, what shall I do? I doubt my father'll never countenance Charles's suit!"

"Why, we'll see that " said I, "when Chas. presses it; it looked a pretty elegant & well-cut sort of a suit, to me."

"Ah " cries she, "you jest!"

"To screen my bleeding heart " says I.

"But I'm serious, 'slife I am! And you know I'm not yet of age."

Said I: "That's a fault limping Time will heal. And yr. father don't seem to object——"

"But *he* objects to my father! And so will father to him, when he learns Chas. is one of these Free Thinkers—for he objects to God, too."

"If he's against the Almighty *and* yr. father " said I, "there may, perhaps, be some obstacle. What d'ye want me to do?"

"O, advise me! He wants me to elope with him."

"Does he begad! Well, weigh him precautiously, & then do as you think best——" For I knew she'd do that in any case.

So she said, in a month or 5 weeks Chas. being of age gets his 2000. And Gretna not too far off. But the best plans can miscarry; & she abhors the thought of any vexatious hitch, that mt. make her look a fool. "But you'll help, when the time comes?"

"Very gratefully I will!" said I; & never spoke truer.

July the 4th, Friday.

In school to-day, I'd the strangest visitor. Came a rap on the door, & "*Intra!*" said I, indifferent: expecting one in quest of ink, or a book, or a boy to be sent to the Head Master; or even (as happen'd t' other day) a phrantick news that so-and-so's mother's cow was being delivered *ex tempore*, & wd. the lad hurry home. But lo, Balbus!

We were at the *Bucolics*; & my lads titter'd explosively when he marched in pat on the line: *Formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse*—"shepherd of a lovely flock, lovelier himself." But Will was not abash'd; & I read such urgency in his honest face, I set my own flock a task & retired with Will to my *sanctum*.

"I ax pardon, troublin' thee " says he sitting gingerly on the brink of his chair, "but I'd no surety thou'd come this week-end, & I dursn't miss thee."

"I'd have come for thy sake " I told him. "But my own

warfare is accomplish'd ; she has chose her ram, & Nick's clear."

"Thou says ! " he nodded, well pleas'd ; & then, " it's Nick I've come about—Mr. Paradise, thou mun write till him ! I don't know whereabouts he lies, nor I've not the scholarship if I did."

"Write what ? " said I, curious ; for I saw Will was deeply moved.

He hung fire for a moment ; then confusedly, " Write, he's to come back. There's—there's queer goin's-on goin' on at home, & I'll maybe want his advice——"

"I'll write now " I said. Whatever was troubling Will, if he thought fit he'd tell it me himself, & if not nothing wd. open him. So, he dictating, I wrote ; & for Nick's sake, because I knew he'd smile, I transcrib'd Will *Δωριστί, verbis ipsissimis*, as here follows :—

Honour'd Sir,

Thoo mun haaste heam, thoo's wantit bad. Sitha keep clear o' t' hoose, coom oop direck till *uz* afore thoo shaws thysen till t' owd corbie. Ah'se expect thee. Saay nowt. Ah'd not hev it kenn't Ah've writ this, leastwaays it's Mr. Paradise hes written't, Ah'm nea scholard thoo knaws. Coom quick lad.

WILLIAM ROTHERY.

"This won't reach till Monday night " said I. "There's no post."

"Nivver mind " says Will. "I'll can get it startit howivver." And he hurried off.

Now, what's in the wind ? I suspect him big with some project, & of a sort wh. I can't help in, or he'd have told me. To revolt with his shepherds, a *plebis secessio* ? He'd have done it before this much-resented clip, if so. Or the *argumentum ad plumbum*—to shoot E. from behind a hedge ? Nay he's no murderer, nor if he was he'd not draw Nick into it ; beside he's shrewd enough to see that E.'s more use to us alive than dead, even now. I can only await the event—with this reflectn. to chasten me : that I, who've still counted myself deep enough to cope with a crooked world, now in advancing yrs. find 2 to match me at least : *videlicet* his present lordship of Yottenfews, & Balbus who (I've long divined) is as deep as both of us put together.

July the 6th, Sunday.

At Yottenfews, after all : partly to see Will (but when I slipt up to Thornholm to-day, he was abroad none knew where) partly to snap up any unconsider'd trifle of news from his Mastership.

My lady on tenter hooks, with a new & humaner loveliness I'd not guess'd in her, till passion had shook her up : her Chas. not here, he's been moved to Carlisle now, & she doubts they'll scarce meet again this side of the blacksmith's anvil. But she seems resolute, only instructs me privily to confirm the verity of that 2000 l.

E.F. contain'd & silent, even more than his wont. To-night I feel thunder in the air. She's gone to her room. I write outdoors, by the sycamore. He at his window, not far off, peruses steadily of a paper that's just come in : the *London Gazette*, I think. To-morrow I'll explore what satisfying news he has found in it, if I have to fetch it from Whitehaven ; already I fearfully surmise . . .

O Eldon Fleming, thou hast me to reckon with, in that case ! Mine honesty & I begin to square, like Shakespeare's renegade's. I've served thee faithfully : maybe too faithfully. But if thou ruin Nick by God I'll ruin thee : tho' I share thy perdition.

*[Here ends the transcript
from the journal of
Mr. Paradise.]*

PART FOUR

Yottenfews

XXXV

IN JULY, wild thyme and cranesbill and gold ragwort cover our cropped downs, and among them dwarf-roses cluster, frail things with no scent if you pick them, yet wherever these are the turf smells like Arcady. Its fragrance met me with the dawn, as I rode up from Saltcoats ford out of Ravenglass ; and then I knew I was home.

I had left Lindale within an hour of having Will's letter (the good Wilkinsons urging me) and made fifteen miles by dark. A rest then, and supper which Faith had packed, while Brigadier cropped the roadside : then up the fell with a great honey-gold harvest moon, our long shadow ahead of us : and down to Ravenglass before day. A second halt there, to eat again and rest both of us, while the sun lifted from the fells and the harsh gulls beat round ; but from Saltcoats I struck inland and approached Thornholm the back way, as Will's letter bade me.

I found no Will : none but Hannah, in such joy to welcome me as was wonderful to behold. Only when I asked after Will, her face hardened. "He'll be back sometime : dinner, likely . . . nay, nivver ax *me* where he's takken hissel', I'm not in's secrets ! Thou mun bide here for him, he says, and tell neabody ——" And before I could question her : "Off to bed, hinny ! Thou's ridden far eneuf, thou needs rest——"

About ten I woke, Will still absent. "But oh" cried I, "why the mischief must he be off, after sending so urgently ?" Hannah broke suddenly into tears.

"Eh Mr. Nick, it's not the first night he's slep' out this week, shame on him ! O Nicky, is't *my* fault I've nivver borne him a bairn ? And now dear knows what fancy fly-by-night he's got dazzle't with, down there in Egremont or wherivver he steals his time—— !"

I could make nothing of it : bearing in mind that Will was rising fifty now, and a great disliker of womenfolk. I wanted to

comfort her ; yet all that came into my head was an old jest that Will himself used to tell, of a certain spinster in Gosforth : who, asked if she never wished a husband, replied, "Husbind ! What need have I got of a husbind ? I've t' parrot to talk, and t' dog to grool at me, and t' cat to stop oot o' nights. . . ." But this seemed not helpful ; and I was at my wits' end what to say to her, when young Ned Tyson appeared. Then before long, Ned getting over his astonishment at finding me here, they began both at once to give me an account of my uncle's governance down at Yottenfews ; and the old woman quite forgot her jealousy in the indignation they shared.

There'd been sad work, I gathered—my uncle overriding Will every way, even in sheep-affairs of which he had no knowledge : the clip held two weeks early, and not even at Thornholm, but below Yottenfews on the shore : and to cap all (Ned swore) the job of making up the clip into bales, for transport to Kendal Fair, was removed altogether out of Will's control and entrusted to foreigners.

"Foreigners ?" I stared.

"Aye ! Riff-raff, miners, sailor-folk from Man or from God-knows-where !" And for all such-like daftnesses (they said) my uncle gave no reason ; so that the word went round, he'd made the clip and housed the wool in the shore-barn beneath his eye, through mistrust of Will's honesty ; nor would our shepherds have stood this, but Will persuaded them, quoting my order that they must obey my uncle in everything as our one hope to save the place. But now at last the truth was out, that Eldon Fleming had filched Yottenfews in the teeth of us ; and Will feared our folk would break.

And still Will did not appear.

Ned had come for orders. In normal times, hay-harvest followed closely on clip ; and we would use the interval for odd jobs, and in particular for baling the year's wool, sewing it up into great sacks like mattresses for the ponies to take inland. But this year's baling was to be performed by my uncle's foreigners, and our own folk left idle in a holiday for which they gave him no thanks : myself idle too, since Will had urged I should by no means show myself till he'd talked with me. Presently Ned said :

"There's a job we could fettle, though, if ye'd fancy a day on t' fell ?"

I wished nothing better. So at that (Hannah occupied elsewhere) Ned drew me out with a wink as to say : " We'll mind our own business, eh ? " and we slipped off up Worm Gill. At first we talked little, my mind much exercised with the urgency of Will's summons, and with fond thoughts of my sweet Faith : with the change in my fortunes since I last trod Kinniside : with the rare prize which my exile had brought me : and not least (in spite of leaving Faith behind) with the joy of being home again, though here was my home no more. And then Ned must needs be told where I had hidden myself these nine weeks, for of this he knew nothing. Nor was it till I had satisfied his questions, or some of them, that he gave me a fuller tale of what was being done at Yottenfews : and what said—for tongues were busy. Thus I learned, Eldon Fleming would profess no knowledge of me ; and some feared he'd made me away. . . . " But " said I " Will knew I was in Cartmel ! Or Mr. Paradise could have told."

Ned grinned. " Eh, I kenn't Will had more inside his hat nor he'd own till ! But ye mind what-like Will is, Mr. Nick ; chaps 'ud think twice afore they upped an' axed *him* aught, out o' their turn—or if they did, he'd likely give them summat more to think about nor they wantit ! Most on us reckon't Will was satisfied to have ye stop off a bit, till maybe our luck 'ud mend ; but now——" his face clouded. " Dar zonn ! Now Eldon Fleming's legalis't hissel' o' Yottenfews, t' case is alter't . . . aye an' Will's alter't too, since t' news come. I know Will better nor most ; he's got summat brewin'——"

" D'you know he's abroad o' nights ? " said I. Ned glanced at me sharply ; this was fresh to him, I could see, and wondered if I'd done wrong to blab Hannah's confidence. But Ned's answer, when it came, seemed not relevant.

" Evenin's 'll soon be drawin' in——" he lowered his voice, for all the loneliness that surrounded us. " If Eldon Fleming met a accidint this back-end . . . there'd be gey few mourners, some says ! "

" Who says ? "

Ned only shrugged his shoulders.

We crossed the beck, and braced ourselves to the long pull up Caw Fell. Ned had a cart-rope, and I supposed our job was to fetch off a crag-fast sheep from the north face : where they stray sometimes, the poor fools, jumping from ledge to ledge in quest of richer grass till they lack room to turn themselves ; and then a

shepherd must be roped down (when they've been left to weaken, a few days) and recover them willy-nilly. Now of all our folk, none was neater-footed on a crag than young Ned ; so this task fell most to him . . . I'd been disquieted by what he said at the beck, but the steep climb prevented me ; when the slope eased, I said : " I'll lay Will never lent himself to such talk ? He's got more sense : let alone the black wickedness——"

" Nay, I've tell't ye awriddy, Mr. Nick, Will says nowt ! But there's lots grieves for ye ; and yon foul corbie——" He spat.

" Well, you can put such folly out of all your heads " I assured him ; " *I'm* not Fleming's heir ! Whatever happened him I'd be no nearer the farm."

" Unless ye'd marri't it ? " muttered Ned.

I lost patience. " Eh, so that's the scheme ? You're a fool, Ned." He shrugged goodhumouredly.

" I'll not set up to judge o' that—but I'm no tattler, thou knows. I've nobbut given ye what's bein' said these days, since ye ax't me. Don't think *I'm* sayin' it, nor thinkin' it ; I've summat better to do." And he grinned round, so honest-blunt that I must laugh : the more since all that old unhappy business of Barbara seemed far distant, and Faith close to me even here.

I said : " The last I heard of Eldon's lass, she'd set her cap at old Paradise ; and he can have her, for me ! "

" Aye " says Ned, " that's been gossiped too—by gox I'd sooner it was him nor you, Mr. Nick, and I'll say that how-ivver ! "

" And now " I rallied him " let's talk sense. What job's this, anyway ? " For we had topped Caw Fell (which is our bounder on this side) and passed the only crag where sheep were like to be stuck, and Ned kept straight on. " We'll win no sheep the road *you're* going—unless we steal 'em from Wasdale ! "

He stopped and looked at me, fingering his coil of rope. He said : " It's not sheep ; it's them eagles——"

The day was hazy-hot and windless, as I remember it : the far hills not seen, the nearer all of a dull buff : the veiled sun a tawny copper disk—one of those days when our fells seem to hold their breath and wait, and nothing stirs, and the very sheep have withdrawn themselves ; and there'll be thunder at week-end maybe, but not yet. . . . We rested, sweltering ; then Ned told me his aim.

He said, some while back he'd been with a shepherd from Ennerdale, over Revelin where our lands meet ; and their talk turned on eagles which were reckoned to steal a lamb a day out of Borrowdale, each breeding-season. Hitherto we'd gone free ; but this spring, the shepherd said, a pair had nested above Ennerdale on a great crag they call the Pillar Stone ; where if they throve, they'd spoil all of us.

This, Ned told Will : who remarked aye, he fancied more than once he'd seen an eagle from Kinniside ; nor he'd not wonder if they'd had more lambs of ours than we guessed. So, next fine Sunday, what must young Ned do but visit Pillar Stone and spy the nest for himself ; and now he'd show me it.

" But they're not breeding now, Ned ? "

" Next year they will ; and there'll be lambs next year, whoever owns Yottenfews. Forewarn't's forearm't, as they say ! "

We went on, following the ridge that rises to Haycock top ; past which I had never been. Our lands round Kinniside are grass, with scarce a crag on them but the north face of Caw Fell where I'd thought Ned was leading me ; now the bare ridge ahead ran snaking up and down as far as our eyes reached—maybe two miles, to-day—with long gray scree-shoots sweeping down this side and that, and a precipice often fringing it. As we pressed on, an hour beyond our own bounders, Ned glanced towards Wasdale where the fells were blanketing their humped backs, and mist-wraiths tailing down their gills into hidden valleys. " We mun step out ! " he muttered. " Here's no spot for gettin' oursel's misted on——"

Our ridge thinned to a neck, having crags each side, beyond whose edges the next visible ground was two green valley-floors, far below with the sun on them, so that they seemed some other world : Mosedale and Ennerdale, Ned thought, but of this we were unsure. However we crossed the neck to a broad fell-breast opposite, before the mist flowed our way ; and now, he said, we could make shift without our eyes for we were on Pillar Fell, and had no more to do than walk uphill till we reached the cop-carn.

I hoped he was right. I'd been misted a hundred times, but on land I knew well with no crags anywhere about : much different from here. " What ! " says he, " Pillar's a round fell, thou knows ! All roads lead till t' top——" And sure enough, in a few minutes of easy walking, the carn loomed ahead.

While we paused, roasting-hot for all the mist, Ned tossed his
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cap down the far slope to mark our direction. "We mun mak' no mistake with gettin' turn't about" he laughed, "or we'll miss t' Girt Stone altogether!" But the Stone was close by, he vowed. Soon we descended (the ground falling now, but nowhere precipitous nor too rough) into what seemed like such another funnel as we had passed, crossing the ridge. This steepened presently to a scree, down which we slid and stumbled a few hundred feet till Ned signalled me to pull up. "Listen!" he bade.

We stood still in the dank whiteness. Far below we could hear the stones our slide had dislodged, bounding and rattling down the unseen shoot as though they would never reach bottom. When that sound died, Ned raised his head and let out such a yell as startled me from my wits—and instantly it clapped back at us, uncannily close, and muffled, so that I could have sworn we were inside some vast building. "Sithee? Yon's t' echo off t' Stone!" he exclaimed.

While he spoke, came a wonder I shall never forget. A little wind blew up the fell, and pulled the mist to bits and scattered them like torn paper; and the great Stone leapt at our eyes.

XXXVI

I CRIED OUT, so evil and grim a thing it looked towering over us. Out of the mist that swathed its base it rose, far down the scree, in stacked columns: organ-pipes, witched into rock. About our level, yet high above the vapour they rode upon, these clustering buttresses were sheared off at a clean slant, like the roof of a pent-house; above which, a huge squat tower of gnarled and riven crags gashed the sky. Ned plucked me. I turned to him at last. "Summat worth comin' for?" he whispered, his eyes dancing. Then he plunged on down the loose scree, myself in his wake.

It had seemed we might climb the Stone itself by a grass-spur above our left. But this was not so; the spur broke off at a precipice, less high than that of the main crag but more terrible, for it looked even to overhang; and between their walls lay a chasm, its sides from eighty to a hundred feet as I reckoned, its width barely a score.

Into this we clambered.

Then Ned showed me, high up on the Stone, a crevice in a

recess with a boulder jammed fast in it; beneath which, streaking the sheer wall down to where we stood, were the marks of birds' droppings. "Yon's them!" says he.

We saw no eagles. If they still used the nest, they were hunting. I gathered pebbles from the bed of the cleft; but throw as I would, they fell much short of the jammed stone where this year's brood had been reared. "Nay" says Ned "that'll nivver be the way! Next spring we'll come at 'em from above."

I stared. "You're cracked, Ned! We'd have to climb the Stone!"

"I've clim't it!" he exulted.

Forthwith he bade me follow him down from the cleft by a ladder of tumbled boulders—but with care, he adjured me: this ladder overhung an abyss. We could not see it, for the mist choked the lower part of our gully: which was perhaps as well. By and by he stopped; and when I joined him, I found we were now abreast of the pent-house of slabs. They stretched to our left, crossing the precipice to abut on a rock-curtain. "We mun work out along them till yon rib" says Ned, "and then there's a road up——" But first he unslung his rope, and tied one end round his own middle and the other round mine; and while he did so, I peered out along that slanting roof, and marked how awfully its edge fell into nothingness, and grew sick. "This is plain murder, Ned——!"

"Away!" said he. "I've done't by my lone, it's none so bad as it looks—with two on us, it's fair easy! Sithee, we'll not stir only one at a time, while t' other stops planted. Wedge thysel' knee-and-backside in this crack, till I've crossed t' slab; so if I maff it an' roll over t' edge, I'se not gan till t' bottom!"

And because I was Master to him still, and felt shame to hang back where he led, I jammed myself as he bade me; and paid the rope out, watching fearfully while Ned clawed his way across. In a few minutes (but they seemed an eternity) he gained the rib without mishap, and hitched himself to a flake; and from there beckoned me, and took in rope as I came.

But in truth, to perform the job was easier than to watch him at it: partly because I could not now see down the abyss, partly because my mind and body were so occupied with moving from hold to hold, there was no room for fear. And so presently I had joined him.

The rib was not quite so sheer as it had looked, nor so

difficult, being split into blocks like flagstones piled on end, with holds at their top edges. Ned climbed straight up it, five-and-twenty feet or so ; and I followed him with more heart. He had got himself anchored in a notch, between the cliff and a great outward-leaning pinnacle ; and through this notch we could see into a fresh gully, straiter and deeper-cut than that by which we had escaped from the cleft, yet not without ledges : which he ascended (myself wedged in the notch) till my turn began anew . . . And beneath or around us all this while, when we had time, we saw the mist-wraiths shift and cling and waver, sluggish on the still air. Sometimes they melted, startling us with sudden prospects up or down the black gully ; sometimes they thickened against the precipice, so that more ribs and pinnacles swam into view. But in the main I thought them denser than they had been, for often I could not see Ned even ; only our voices linked us, very companionly, answering to and fro between the echoing walls in that white gloom ; and between-whiles the ripple of the rope was a good sound to hear, running on some edge as Ned gathered it ; and there was water far below, whose blind noise came faint to us ; and once, a mile away maybe, a lamb's cry and the ewe's answer. So we hauled ourselves up from ledge to hopeful ledge—our hair dank, our hands chill from the kiss of the rock, its earthy smell in our nostrils—till the gully became less steep. At last it eased on to a little funnel of scree ; up which we raced, and met the tang of colder air. " Eh, we're on t' top ! " Ned shouted.

I took his word. I could see nothing, save that we had gained a plat of rock not less than thirty foot wide. Ned advanced cautiously : and I with my heart in my mouth, for I felt untrammelled space all around us ; nor was it hard to picture the result of one unwary step, with the sharp memory of those tremendous precipices in mind. Soon we came out on to a brink, with nothing but mist below, and skirting this found ourselves opposite a flake of rock detached from the crag : where, ten foot down, we spied the wrack of the old filthy nest strowing the jammed boulder. " Next spring we'll fettle 'em ! " vaunted Ned.

We sat, and peered down between our boots at the nest. Ned thought next breeding-time there'd still be snow in the gullies ; so we'd done well to learn ourselves this road while the rocks were easy to climb. " For there's nowt hard till't ? " he challenged ; and I had to agree, it was more fearful than

difficult. Yet I reflected, Ned first climbed alone with no rope, and no security that he could get to the top, nor down off it if he did : and on a clear day (as he told me presently) when the terrors beneath were not hidden. He went on : " We'll keep our gobs shut, or we'll find half Ennerd'le here ahead on us—and them eaglets is rightly ours ! "

" We're the first, think you ? "

" I'm gey sure. Few of our lads has ivver been on t' fell even ; and as for Ennerd'le, their chap said—him as tell't me about the nest—' We're flay't of t' Stone ' he says, ' and them eagles knows it, I reckon ! ' Mind, it looks fearsomer their side nor ours, I would say ; seven hundred feet, he tell't me the north face 'ud be. I'd a fine day afore, and gox, from t' back side ye'd swear ye could spit in Ennerd'le a mile down ! It's a grand stone howivver . . . now we mun clim' off."

We found our gully-head, not without trouble in the mist, and began to lower ourselves down the ledges. The descent from the notch proved worse than coming up ; and indeed here I might have ended my adventure for good, lacking Ned's care. For while I dangled at arms' length, and like the dove in Scripture found no place to rest the sole of my foot, a loose flake gave ; and I should surely have rolled off the roof, had not Ned held me. I looked up when I was firm again, much shamed, to find him grinning down from the notch. " Nay, we're doin' grand—that's what t' rope's for ! " says he. " Good men's scarce, nowadays——"

And so we regained the fell.

Now neither Stone nor cleft nor aught else was visible, so thick the mist had become ; and when we scrambled from the great doup again, to take our bearings at the carn, we could not manage to find it. But Ned said no matter, up the breast and down the other side was our road ; nor could we miss our narrow neck in any case, the crags hemming it. It was farther than we expected ; however we reached a point at last, where prying left and right we found ourselves between the rims of two precipices, with our way running fair ahead of us like a cat's on a wall. Then came a saddle, pretty much as we remembered it midway from Haycock. We had gone half-an-hour from the doup-head, and judged we should take as long again before this bald ridge turned us loose on the grasslands which we both knew, an hour above Worm Gill. So we stepped out

more confidently, the ground easier now ; till on a sudden, far beneath our left, a dog began barking.

We eyed each other, perplexed. At this season, in such weather particularly, no shepherd would be abroad ; nor by our reckoning should there be a farm within four mile of us, down that way.

" We're wrong, Ned. How far's that dog off ? "

" Three-quarter mile, maybe. "

" Then where—— ? "

He pondered. " Wasd'le, eh ? We've turn't south. "

" We must bear right, then ? "

" Nay, if we're up over Wasd'le an' strike off, we'll land oursel's intil a maze of twisty spots, back of anywhere ! We'd likely wander all night. Wasd'le, it'll have to be—and a parlish long road home, dang it ! "

There were crags on our left, so we kept on to find a scree-gap which Ned said they called the Dore, above Wasdale. Our way descended ; soon the mist thinned, and we found ourselves looking into a green valley-head, a thousand feet below. Round this rose an amphitheatre of fells, their tops not seen for cloud, little steep gills lacing them ; but on the green floor these gills made a beck which wound away down the valley, farther than we could see. There were no houses, only a small hut by the beckside—a peat-shed, it looked like—and again we heard the dog bark. " That's never Wasdale ! " I exclaimed. " There's white farms in Wasdale—— " For I'd ridden there sometimes, to clips or funerals while my father was alive.

" Nay ? " says Ned. " Then I'm bet ! "

I cried suddenly : " We're in Ennerdale—— ! " Over the shoulder from our right, a faint track zigzagged through the mist and dropped towards the valley. " There's the Trod ! " I had heard my father speak of it : a packroute, long disused, which monks or such-like had made. " We can cross back to Wasdale, that way ! "

" Aye, and loss oursel's up in t' mist agen ! "

" Not now we know where we are. "↓

Ned grinned. " We reckon't we knew that afore ? " And so dubious was he (the afternoon being far advanced) I allowed him to overrule me, and we struck slantwise towards the track we had spied and made for the green bottom. " Where there's a dog, there's folk ! " said he. " We'll sleep there, if t' worst comes. "

I hoped they might have food for us ; we'd fasted since noon. "Aye, gox !" Ned sighed. "I'm that clemmed, I could wipe me nose on the skin of me belly . . ."

We were a quarter-mile above the hut when a man came from it, and stooped at some job outside—starting a fire against the wall, it seemed, for a spindle of smoke rose up. Just then he saw us, watched intently for awhile as we came down the fell, and presently ran indoors. A second man came out with him, and they stood shading their eyes. Suddenly Ned gave a queer cry and gripped my arm ; I turned, and his face was ashen.

"We're done for !" says he in a hoarse voice. "It's the mist-boggle has picked on us—we're dead men !" And that scared me. For I'd thought more than once to-day of the mist-boggle ; which meets you on the veiled tops, and beckons you, when your death-hour is at hand.

He continued pointing towards the hut, and leaned hard on me ; I heard his teeth click together. "Oh, dear God !" he whispered low. "Can ye not tell what-like *them* are ? See the tall one—the tall one, Mr. Nicky !"

I looked again. I stared. My senses reeled, the very blood seemed to ebb out of me . . . Then I was running down the fell as I had never run in my life.

XXXVII

MY FATHER waited by the hut : bareheaded, coatless, in a sleeved vest of velvet trimmed with silver braid which I remembered from childhood : his hands stretched towards me, and a little twisted smile on his lips. I flung myself at him. "Dear lad—O my dear lad !" said he.

Then he was laughing ; he was never one to show his sensibilities, when most moved. "Thou'rt early—and no wonder, if thou'st run that gait all the way !"

I sobbed : "You're not dead ! Oh, God send you're not dead—— !"

He laughed still. "Not near so dead as some would hope ! But Will's told thee—how much ?"

Then I said, I'd seen nothing of Will, but had been on the fells since my return this morning, and lost myself, and at last come unawares into Ennerdale—if Ennerdale this was ?

"Surely" said he. It seemed Will lay here last night, and to-day left for Thornholm where he did not think I could arrive before dusk. But for the mist's sake he had not crossed Pillar Fell, but walked seven miles down Ennerdale, whence he'd climb over into Calder-head by a path which he knew blind : and now no doubt would be swearing . . . I listened, but paid no heed : being indifferent what became of Will or anyone, my father back from the grave. I held him off me at arms' length and searched his face—his dear face seamed with a puckered scar (but he made light of this) where a sword-point had grazed it, and had bit his cheek to the bone. More plaguy awkward, he complained, was a stray musket-ball from God-knew-where which struck him below the kneecap, that he could neither walk nor ride for four months——

"But they found you—they'd buried you" I whispered. "They brought your coat home !"

"You may thank George who brought *me* home, and left the coat !" he smiled. "You've not greeted George yet——" For indeed while we two embraced, George Huthwaite kept his distance, witnessing our great joy. I gripped his hands, and he laughed with us.

"T' Maister's in grand shape, eh ? What, it tak's more nor redcoats to put down a Fleming, thou knows !"

"Is that Ned Tyson ?" asked my father—poor Ned still watching from the fellside, scared to come near : and the dog Rake, whom I'd given up for dead, circling round him. It was Rake's bark we had heard ; and while my father and I talked, Rake ran to meet Ned ; but Ned retreated from the dog's approach and was adjuring him to keep off.

"Ned thinks you're all ghosts" said I.

"Away George, and fetch him !" says my father. "We'll sit down to meat when it's ready ; young Ned can lend you a hand . . . heaven help the lad, he's begun crossing himself now ! Where did he learn *that* trick—— ?"

But we two moved off and sat ourselves on a flat stone by the beckside : where now in part (but much more fully afterwards) I was told how George Huthwaite saved my father's life ; and how at last, after great hardship and him lying mortal sick for weeks, they had won here.

I learned, the day of Clifton fight the rebels brought their guns off Shap without loss : the rearguard halting short of

Penrith, till the rest should get clear away. Towards dusk word came from the Young Chevalier for the rearguard to close with him. But this was flouted; for the Macdonald's men, now strongly posted at a hedge, disdained to cede more ground; and when some hundreds of the Duke's dragoons were seen to dismount (who had harried them all day) these clansmen fiercely began instructing their officers that a counter-stroke should be given. Just now my father rode back to inquire what the matter was (being aide-de-campe to Lord George Murray who commanded the rear) and found the clansmen hacking gaps in the hedge: through which they burst, and in a rainy twilight hurled themselves on the dragoons. And henceforth everything must miscarry. For the long claymores broke on the skullcaps of the dragoons, and the clansmen were rolled back; yet they reoccupied their hedge in good order.

So came a lull—the dragoons venturing nothing, numerous though they were, till their reinforcement was ready: the Scots reloading their dropped muskets, if they could find them; for by now it was quite night. The rain had ceased for the present; the moon in her second quarter broke out from time to time, but not long. Meanwhile Lord Murray made his way along the line of the hedge, on foot, heartening each company: my father attending him. They had just reached our flank when the action began again—but now disastrously, the rebels soon in full retreat beneath the dragoons' numbers, confusion everywhere, and the muskets popping off at close range; in which pell-mell a thrust from some antagonist he never saw laid open my father's cheek, and clap on that his knee was shattered by a musket-ball, and he fell.

And now George Huthwaite did a thing as cunning as ever I heard on, and as brave too. He could not drag my father off, the retreat ebbing so rapidly: nor bestride him and hold the world at bay, homeric-wise, for the enemy came too thick. So he dropped full-length on his master's senseless form, and lay passive . . . You can mock if you like, at George shamming dead without a scratch while others died round him; he mocked at himself. "I was that flay't" he said, "I felt as if I'd swaller't an ice-shockle, an' waitin' to retch it up——" But recall first, he had come merely for my father's sake and cared not which side won: and secondly, that to protect my father he exposed himself to being slaughtered defenceless by any redcoat who noticed him, as the pursuit surged by. However, by God's grace

the worst thing that happened him was a kick in the ribs, and this broke two of them ; but he kept mute.

Well, the fight shortly passed. And George, who deemed them still too plainly in the public thoroughfare for his fancy, got up and lugged my father off : having first sheathed his sword (he knew how my father valued that) in the sash attached to his surcoat. They reached a coppice, where their horses had been tied : during which act—my father still insensible, and George dragging his coat-neck—the coat came off and George left it, sword and all. In the wood he bound up my father's face, and heaved him crosswise over one of the horses : and so leading both, in a blind interim when the moon was obscured, contrived to make his escape. Nor had they barely quit the wood (George said) when the fight swayed back over where they had been and the rebels regained the hedge. And yet whoever found my father's coat got no good of it : being killed that same night, and his poor body flung in Clifton dam, as you know already.

But you must understand I had no more than a bare skeleton of all this tale, for the present. At supper we got the rest—I mean myself and Ned, who was at ease by then and kept demanding to hear everything since the hour he'd been sent home. But at first, while we sat beside the beck and the mild dusk closed round us, I was still in a dream : my heart brim-full with certain things concerning which I'd reproached myself : " If I'd said such-and-such to him, while he still lived—— ! " And now he lived again, and could hear. Yet we talked little, this sweet half-hour, as the fells dimmed from buff to bronze and from bronze to violet, and the day ebbed down the valley ; and sometimes I watched his face and listened to his voice without following him ; and sometimes I wept.

Rake came and propped himself against our knees ; and soon George called us to dinner.

XXXVIII

" ART HUNGRY, Nick ? " says my father.

I could have ate horses ; but I had clean forgot that. What moved my wonder was that he and George should live alone in this wild nook, and find sustenance : eight weeks now, I was told. " What *do* you eat here ? " I asked him.

“ Why, fish ! ” says he. “ The beck’s full of ’em. We keep perennial Friday in Ennerdale—I hope ’twill be remembered to me for righteousness, when my time comes ! ”

Now I learned most of what I have written above : my father telling it with many a dry jest, as though it had been a pic-nic, and George putting in a word at intervals while he served us ; for neither he nor Ned would sit down to meat with us, but waited till we were done. Then after dark we lay outside the door of the hut, while Ned and George fell to ; and I heard the rest of the story.

George fetched my father clean away, face-downward across the horse : and held him so, for he remained in the deep swoon into which he had fallen. They first went blindly through fields ; then struck a packroad and turned west, while the noise dwindled behind them. A shepherd met them on his cob, with a lantern, who told George the packroad led to Ulleswater lake ; and George pricked up his ears. For he remembered, a young chap who worked for us ten years ago had wed an Ulleswater girl, and lived there yet, he believed. Meanwhile the shepherd showed a sharp curiosity ; so George explained they were militiamen from Carlisle who had been pressed to fight these Scotch, but his friend was sore hurt, and could the shepherd say where Eli Kitchin lived in that neighbourhood ? Why yes, he said, Eli farmed Ellerbeck at the lake-foot ; and he’d turn back with them, but he must fetch his wife the doctor from Penrith. George said, they’d manage. So about ten o’clock they reached Ellerbeck——

“ The longest five miles of thy life, eh George ? ” says my father—for the good fellow came out with a cloak just then, lest he took cold. When we were alone again, I heard what valiant faithful service George still rendered that night : in darkness and rain, with two ribs broke, by a rough road and strange to him, and leading also the spare horse which he was resolute not to part with . . . and so he hammered on the door at Ellerbeck till Eli came down from bed.

“ Thou’s forgot me ? ” says George ; for indeed Eli thought it was the highlanders come to ravish him.

“ I’ve nivver known thee ! ” says he.

“ But thou knows Fleming o’ Yottenfews ” says George softly. “ He’s in t’ lonnin here—help us for God’s sake, min, or I misdoubt he’ll be dead ! ”

So at my father’s whispered name, Eli ran barefoot out into

the lonnin and helped George lift him indoors ; and they worked long to revive him.

I cried : " You were senseless all this while ? "

" From Clifton till daylight " nodded my father. " We have only George to thank that I'm here."

At daybreak the Penrith doctor came, having learned from the shepherd that there was more work for him at Ellerbeck. He dressed my father's cheek and knee—not without questions, to which Eli gave the same reply as the shepherd had had of George : namely that these were two militiamen from Carlisle, pressed by Colonel Durand. And because George's broad speech proved his origin, and it was known that almost nobody in Cumberland had ridden to join the Scots, this tale passed muster.

Yet neither George nor Eli deemed it wise for my father to bide here. For at Lowther they had Lord Lonsdale for a neighbour, now lord-lieutenant : and at Penrith, the sheriff—" Old Firkin Pattinson, whom *you* met. He's a good fellow ; and since we're friends, I'd have put him in a predicament if I'd been caught so near him. But the doctor was our chief fear—" For it seemed that this doctor was a bitter bigoted Whig, inquisitive as a monkey ; and Eli feared, when my father's description should be promulgated, the doctor might smell him out.

" But sir, they'd satisfied themselves you were dead—"

" Aye, had they ! " my father smiled. " Only d'ye see, we'd not been notified of our decease, at this time ! So after four days, ere the doctor came again, they carried me to a boat, and Eli rowed me to the lake-head at Patterdale, and George took our beasts by land. We lodged there seven days."

" You'd money, then ? " I put in ; for I remembered, I had tried to draw against some such need.

" Oh aye, my purse was in my breeches-belt, not lost with the coat ; and Eli would take nothing. But at the week-end whom should George meet but this plaguy doctor from Penrith : who stared at him narrowly. " We mun lose *him* " says George, " he's the lang-nebbedest feller thou ivver saw ! ' So we set out again on our travels."

" You could ride now ? "

" Not a pennyworth. George heaved me on to the quiet horse—old Sam, you'll mind him—where I sat sideways like some Betty-jog-to-market, George holding my bridle : and the bay on a rein—" They had crossed Grisedale pass that day,

to Armboth on Leathes-water : and next to Borrowdale, by Watendlath. George hoped to find work with the shepherds of Borrowdale, for a snowfall had set in. "December thirtieth, that would be ; a bitter cold ride we had of it."

I said : " Soon after, we were digging out drifted sheep——"

" Did you save them ? " he asked me.

" All but three."

" Good lad . . . George got no shepherding (they don't like strangers in Borrowdale) but instead chanced upon the queerest job in the world. There's a wadd-mine up there—plumbago, black stuff, worth as much as thirty shilling the pound—which has suffered greatly from pilferers. We lodged with the overman : who when he heard that George had followed the profession of arms, hired him to watch the drift-mouth with a brace of muskets, and to scare night-marauders away. . . . You must know, Nick, that all this time I was dependent on George wholly ; for my knee stiffened from our ride, and I couldn't set foot to earth——"

" Not for three month " George grumbled from the door of the hut. " And if he bides out there and tak's a chill, he'll likely be three more ; so fetch him in, Mr. Nicky ! "

Inside we made our beds on heaps of dried bracken and the shepherds fell silent, sleeping, or listening to my father ; for I must hear the tale out. I learned how remote was Borrowdale (not for a fortnight after we had heard it at Yottenfews, did he have word of his own death) and how safe, since folk in Borrowdale are apt to mind their own business. " They've a name for stupidity " said he. " They are reputed to have walled their valley-mouth, to confine the cuckoo and ensure a permanent Spring ; but I suspect their reputation is home-made, to disarm strangers. There's queer doings in Borrowdale ; the smugglers cross by Esk Hause and Sty pass, to store their loads in the valley ; and the wadd-stealers, who provided George his job ; and distillers—there's enough whisky yearly made in Borrowdale to flood Keswick lake. Nothing on wheels comes there, nor hardly any one from the outside world but a stray pedlar—oh, 'tis a right spot to lie hid in, Nicky, if you're discreet and show no curiosity as to how your next neighbour lives ! "

" So you lay there three months ? "

" Longer : into May—and sick for my own hills, though Borrowdale's a fair place. While my knee healed I combed and

carded and spun wool for the Seatoller wives (I'm a rare spinster now, I assure thee) partly to earn a groat towards our joint keep, but more in policy—for I worked cheap, or *gratis*; and thus I counterbalanced George's vigilance against wadd-thieves, especially as George never hit none. Though how he missed 'em in the narrow mouth of the drift, I've been much puzzled to know!"

"What, I left t' bullets out when I filled t' guns!" George muttered sleepily from the darkness. "It worked as well—they didn't know, and t' girt bang-an'-bleeze allus flay't 'em——"

"Soon after Candlemas" my father's quiet voice resumed, "the pedlar who'd reported me my own death came round with news much less welcome. He was from the coast, by Sty Head; and he now told how this dead Fleming's brother had stepped into his shoes, or into his farm anyway, since his own house got harried; and how some said that he was nursing the estate for the heir, and others that he'd plain filched it—'standing well with the Law, d'ye see' our pedlar winks at us, 'which is esteem't more in West Cumberlan' nor 'tis here!'" My father shook his head. "George and I knew not what to make of it. We'd naught but gossip to go upon, and we dursn't show interest. We could but hope against the judgment of our hearts that Brother Eldon was upright; and whether or no, he must be given the benefit of this precarious doubt, or the place was lost anyway . . . *You'd* the same counsel, Rothery tells me since, from wise friends?"

I said: "We were sore beset——" And his hand touched mine in the dark.

"I know. O Nick my son, my offence is grievous against thee!"

"Nay, you're back; that pays all! What's Yottenfews, you surviving . . ."

Presently he resumed: "In April George threw up his job and went off to Ennerdale—he'd be worth his keep there, for lambing. I stayed; the mild weather brought me strength, and I could stand my turn drift-watching (but no one meddled with me there, George had so dashed them) and beside we had sold the horses about this time, so there was money enough. . . . George worked for Bowman of Ennerdale; they didn't know him from Adam, but they weren't long in finding him a right good hand at the sheep. When lambing finished, Bowman offered George a wage; but George said he'd had his keep,

he'd ask no pay if he might bide a little at the hut, now not used ; for he let on he'd been in trouble with the excisemen, where he came from. 'Stop on and welcome' Bowman says ; 'I'se ax no questions, and thou'll have an eye to the sheep——' For in these parts they're often cragfast. Then George fetched me from Borrowdale, and we've lain here eight weeks."

"And Rake?" said I ; for this puzzle alone remained. My father chuckled ; and in the dark the old dog's tail thwacked the floor a stroke or two, as he heard his name on our lips.

"I'd forgot Rake . . . when George came, the first thing he said was : 'I'm back, then' says he, 'and I've a friend outside laitin' ye !' And I'd not hardly spoke when Rake was over the yard-wall at me like a hurricane—I feared he'd have died for joy !" It seemed George slipped away from Ennerdale one clear night, and tramped seven miles over the moonlit fells to divulge Will the secret. But we were thrang with our own lambing then, and lanterns everywhere, and George durst not show himself. Yet Rake must have picked up his remembered scent, and linked it in his dog-mind with the Master's absence ; for next evening he appeared.

"I mourned him for dead" said I, "and made sure she'd poisoned him——"

"She? Eh, thy cruel lady-love, to be sure——"

He broke off, and I perceived that Will had told him of Barbara ; and for the first time, I protest, the thought rose up at me how impiously I had done : that of all girls alive I must needs choose the daughter of his bitterest enemy to pay court to. I muttered : "Thank God *that's* dead at least—— !"

"Dead——" he echoed me ; and stayed silent.

By and by : "We're all dead, Nicky. Ghosts, we are—Ned was right—poor foolish ineffective ghosts from a world that has cracked round us : drifting, blown down the wind of circumstance, hoping against all sense and likelihood that a ruffian might prove true. Yet ghostly or bodily, we survive——" He sat up (I heard the bracken rustle) and his voice came eager and clear. "By the lord, Nick, he'll find our ghosts shall walk and trouble him notwithstanding, he's not done with us yet ! So to-morrow we take counsel. . . ."

I knew not what plan he had in mind—I doubt if he had any ; and I'm sure neither of us foresaw into what whirl of strange and perilous events our next step was to plunge us. I was dog-weary

and slept, bruised almost to insensibility by the long day, and the marvel of getting him back ; but oh, I slept happy !

XXXIX

NEXT DAY Will came . . . but I'm forgetting, I have not yet told how the wonderful news reached him.

At first my father had been much displeased at George's foray to Thornholm, and forbade him utterly to repeat it : chiefly, on my account. If his escape leaked out, not only would all chance of my regaining Yottenfews be frustrated, but they'd charge me with harbouring him ; he planned to stay dead, till they tired of rebel-hunting and the September Assize was past ; then (the Revolt stale news by this, and magistrates less alert) to warn us privily, and with our help to ship himself into Man ; meanwhile for all our sakes, the God-sent secrecy of Ennerdale must not be endangered . . . Yet this secrecy worked two ways ; here came no pedlars, and if George passed the time of day with any of Bowman's lads he durst not angle for news. Thus it was not till two months after my departure from Yottenfews that George heard I'd gone, none knew whither : which seemed so ominous, my father slackened his resolve and let George venture again : " Who like Noah's cushat, twice dispatched " he smiled, " brought back Will Rothery in his beak swearing strange oaths of joy ; and Will in turn summoned thee."

Will had tramped over every day since George first fetched him a week ago ; sometimes he'd stayed the night. I laughed.

" Hannah thinks he's off wenching——"

" Aye, poor heart. Will says, she's safer grumbling over the wrong cause than blabbing thanksgivings for the right one . . . " We had sat since breakfast expecting Will, in the mild sun outside the hut, while Ned and George went off to fish the beck with their angles. And I'd so much to ask, at last my father vowed he would not open his lips again till he heard my own story. I told him all : my flight from home, my dishonest mission to Cartmel, my friendship with John ; and then the beauty of old Isaac's kindness to me, and my own change of spirit. Barbara I scarce mentioned ; he'd had her from Will, with each minutest detail of Yottenfews before and after my going. But about Faith I spoke . . . in old days that might have

been too hard ; but now the grave had sent him back, and our love knew no barriers, and I bared him my heart.

His eyes twinkled. I said : “ You’re not vexed at us ? ”

“ Vexed ? ” He laughed outright. “ Vexed, at a story fit to shake the ribs of the gods ! O Nick, my honest Nick, here’s deeper comedy than you’ve fathomed ! First, look you, Eldon turns me a blind eye to your courtship of his girl : not through goodwill—he hates you worse than hell for my sake—but because he is still unsure if he can filch the inheritance, or must marry into it at your cost. However, this plan miscarries ; you and his decoy-duck fall out——”

“ D’ye mean, she was party to it ? ”

“ Nay, from all I hear she’s a graceless obstinate baggage, and helps none but herself ; yet I think he was using her. But you fall out before he can decide if such a match will be politick. Nimble, he shifts ground ; he perceives you now angry, disenchanted, apt to undertake the commission you’d once refused ; he urges you off to Cartmel . . . for awhile, though, he still speaks well of you, and by sly hints instructs his Barbara that you’re worth keeping in mind——”

“ But, sir ” I broke in, “ how do you know such things ? Will Rothery couldn’t hear ’em ! ”

“ You forget one loyal friend you left—Will thinks the world of him ; this Mr. Paradise——”

“ I wish to heaven I could forget. Still, I’ll not grumble at his notion of loyalty ; he has done me nothing but good.”

“ More than you yet guess ” says my father. “ Meanwhile you’re at Cartmel—for Eldon’s sake, *he* supposes ; Eldon is left, in that possession which is nine points of law. In London his friends pull strings for him ; at home he nurses both his schemes as a juggler his coloured balls, cunning to drop neither—your match with Barbara (if the Whigs fail him) and this iron-secret which he is now confident you’ll smell out. And you—— ? O you rogue, Nick, you cheat him at every turn ! You secure a substitute for his Barbara ; you learn a trade to make you independent of *him* ; and apart from these interesting pursuits—in your spare time, as ’twere—you’ve ruined him ! ”

I stared. “ I’d say, he’s ruined *us* ! ”

“ Time will show. We’re not finished with him yet——” He looked at me keenly. “ Bigrigg is finished, though ! D’ye know that ? ”

“ Bigrigg—— ? ”

He nodded. "Bankrupt, Nick. Not all his brains and jugglery can keep that alive, since timber has run out. Your mission was his sole hope—you'll see, his first demand to you will be: 'Have you fetched Wilkinson's secret?' If you had, by heaven I think he'd have swapped the farm for it—but I'm happier you've stayed clean. Well, Bigrigg goes (Will has this of Mr. Paradise, 'tis being kept dark at present) and hence *our* gambit begins. You'll write to Wilkinson—aye to-day, no time to be lost—say, Bigrigg's under the hammer. It'll fetch no price here; for they'll instruct themselves, if Fleming of Egremont can't make it pay, who the devil can? But Wilkinson . . . if the old man's as shrewd as you report him, he'll conceal his name and buy cheap. At least you'll have put this in his power, casting your bread upon the waters of Cartmel—or your uncle's bread, I should say——" and he laughed very cheerfully. "Likely you'll find it, after not so many days! Now go write to him—and your Faith!"

I heard Rake's bark at the beck-side: and not long afterwards, my father outside the hut. "Nick's safe—aye, they're both here!" Soon Will appeared, and with thunderous great oaths gave vent to his relief. Hannah had told him of our disappearance yesterday, with a rope (we might have known that we should not elude that sharp eye) and to-day he'd prolonged his four-hour tramp, to skirt Caw Fell and a precipice overlooking Ennerdale, the only crags in our bounds: where seeing no trace of us, he guessed we had lost ourselves among the mists and spent our night in some gully. "Anyway what was t' cart-rope for?" he inquired.

So I confessed (what we'd kept mum before) our escapade on the Pillar. My father frowned. "The Stone? That's no place for you—why, I'd not tempt it myself!"

"But you will, sir! You'd relish it—and there's no danger Ned's way. Next year we'll harry their nest!"

"This year, next year——" he muttered. "There's a corbie to harry out of *your* nest first, my lad. Your eaglets can wait their turn . . . now Will, what's news?"

Will told it. My uncle, not content with clipping a fortnight too soon, and at Caldermouth, and with fetching his foreigners to bale the wool, now planned to send it to Keswick. My father stared.

"Keswick? He'll get no price there!"

"Aye, so I tell't him. 'Kendal's our mart' I said. And says he: 'I'm aware of that, *Mister* Rothery; but I hear they're not open yet.' So I said aye, they'd not shift Kendal Fair to suit folk as clipped too early; but he'd give sore offence. 'To whom?' says he. 'Why, till our chaps whose turn it is to lead the train' says I: 'this trip to Kendal's summat they look forward till, all t' year round; they'll think nowt o' Keswick!' 'It will not concern them' says he; and then he tell't me he'd hired drivers from Whitehaven, and our chaps could bide home."

"So-ho——!" my father mused. "And about Nick, here?"

"Aye, I took t' opportunity. Says I: 'Now Yottenfews is yourn, will ye have Mr. Nicky farm it for ye, or what?' And says he: 'My nephew ran away to please himself; when he returns, there will be time enough to judge if he's of any value to me.' 'Mr. Fleming' says I, 'ye're ridin' for a fall if ye reckon you can farm Yottenfews.' 'At least I am riding my own horse' says he, 'and speaking of horses, you will have the ponies here on Friday morning next, if you please.' And with that he shows me his backside."

"Very well" says my father quietly. "So now we know where we are. . . ."

For awhile he continued smoking, seated at the hut door. And thus I oftenest remember him: at ease, a long clay between his lips, in his sleeved velvet waistcoat (its braid sadly tarnished now) old threadbare riding-breeks, rough shepherd-brogues and stockings of hodden gray; yet looking elegant as a prince.

For this my uncle and he shared, if they shared nothing else: a kind of innate distinction. Through this, my uncle could dress to the edge of foppishness without seeming a fop; through this, my father might have shown far raggeder than he did, you'd never mistake his quality. In all else they were as unlike as a pair of brothers could be: the one staid, the other merry; the one deliberate and precise in speech, the other quick and impulsive; my uncle sallow and blackhaired, my father tanned—and now still more, from the life here in the free air, so that the beard which he had grown showed pale as chaff against the brown of his skin. Certainly they were both gray-eyed—there are portraits at home of them, identical in this feature; yet the painter has been at fault; for as I've said, my uncle's eyes were frosty-cold even if he smiled at you, my father's alert with laughter.

More than once they had met mine mischievously, while Will said his say ; and I'd laughed back, for sheer joy of him—you'd have thought we had not a care in the world. Now he stood up and spilled the ash from his pipe : and quietly, with neither delay nor haste, began expounding us a detailed plan which might have been formed months back, instead of springing here *ex tempore* from the news Will had brought us.

Says he : " This evening, Nick, thou'rt for Yottenfews—but after dusk, and approaching as though direct from Cartmel. Thou'lt ask Eldon two things : first, does he mean to use thee as his bailiff henceforth ; second, does he consent to pay thy late management—for without that, I think, he would have found he'd stolen a lame horse after all."

" I'se foretell both answers ! " Will muttered.

" Why, yes ; but the rogue must be given his chance of honesty, even now. He'll demand, what of Wilkinson ? And when he hears thy answer to that, he'll show thee—what he showed Will. For indeed he has no choice but to farm the estate himself, Bigrigg being lost. He'll fail ; I doubt if even in his secret heart he foresees the certainty of that failure. But he can't choose—and there we've the start of him ; for 'tis at our discretion whether he fail gradually, or at once."

" I don't follow, sir——"

He continued, ignoring this : " I conceive, at once will be better ; for, if gradually, both the estate and folk on it are worse-hit——"

" Gox aye ! He threats, he'll turn the lot on us adrift an' hire better 'uns——"

" More servile, he means ; because for all his brains, he still supposes he can run a farm like a factory, with mere slaves. And while he is learning his mistake, the farm will go to the devil—its tilth neglected, its livestock dwindling away. That's a thing must not happen."

" But sir, we can't *make* him fail——"

Will broke in : " Can't we then ? Eh Mr. Nick, if I'd not checked t' lads like thou order't me, they'd have shutten him long ago ! "

My father said sharply : " Put such thoughts aside ! I'm no murderer—and the cure's simpler than that." Then he was laughing at us again. " Come, come, you two ! Where's your wit ? Who pays for Yottenfews, when all's said ? "

" Why, the sheep ! " growled Will.

"Aye. And in what currency? In their wool, when 'tis sent inland. And when's that? This week-end . . . Will's begun to catch my meaning, I think."

Will's mouth hung open. Suddenly he smote his thigh and ripped out: "Od sink an' rabbit us! We're to steal Eldon's clip?"

"Not at all" says my father cheerfully: "but to impound our own—a very simple matter indeed, since he's dispatching it by Sty Head . . . so to-night, Nick, thy further errand is to learn by indirect approach what time the pack-ponies leave. Likely he'll not say; and at all cost thou must not betray thyself curious. But thou'lt watch from Calderbrig, or from Gosforth, aye, there's a steep brow back o' Gosforth, will suit—and slip on ahead. The times and distances—h'm, let's see . . ." He took a pencil and figured them, Will and I marvelling at his exactitude: for we'd learned our district, but he knew each hill and hollow of West Cumberland like his hand. "Gosforth to Wasdalehead's three hours, for them; but thou'lt have grass to canter on till the lake-side, and from the lake-head again: and a long start of them from Gosforth Brow—thou'lt beat them by a full hour. At the lake-head bear right, to avoid the farm—if thou'rt remembered to have climbed the pass that day, 'twill damn everything! Dismount: and there's a walled lane by a little box of a church, will keep thee invisible. In a mile more, just when the pass begins, thou'lt find six fir-trees where a gill joins the main beck. Ned shall expect thee there, and bring word what's next to do . . . Now, for money?"

I said, I had plenty from the wages Isaac had paid.

"Bring food—and hark'ee, five long smocks and five mufflers: and a spare lantern: and a bag of powder, and shot. Thou'lt remember?" I promised; he pulled out the big silver watch that had accompanied all his wanderings. "Then be off, and God-speed!"

I had turned towards the high track, when he plucked at me: "Nay, down-valley, lad—" And winking at Will: "The Sail's no way for feckless bird-nesters who can lose themselves in a mist! Strike up, midway from Broad-water; it'll fetch thee to Calderhead."

So this way I took: my mind awl with the adventure that he had launched me on, and his merry laugh in my ears.

XL

IN ABOUT four hours I reached Thornholm, where I should have supped ; but Hannah's first half-dozen questions tied me in such a knot that I fled her, saddled Brigadier forthwith, and rode fasting to Gosforth. Here while night thickened I made my meal at the post-inn, sealed up my letters, and delivered them for the South Bag. It was black-dark and not much short of ten o'clock as I neared Yottenfews : the moon still under Wasdale fells, though I knew she was on her way. At the lane-foot from Gosforth there had been trees till recently, now hacked down, where in childhood I'd feared ghosts . . . I fell thinking of my father's words, half-earnest, half-fanciful : "Ghosts we are, drifting down the wind of circumstance—but we'll walk, and trouble him !" And my heart leaped. Desperate our case might be ; yet since last night, the long futility that had oppressed us was blown away, and life's pulse quickened, as though not he alone but all who loved him at Yottenfews had been restored from the dead.

At the house all was dark, even my uncle's room which faced inland ; I marvelled if he had gone to bed, for he never kept country hours. But when I turned the house-end, there was a light in Barbara's, and I fancied her curtain stirred. I slipped from Brigadier, and was hitching him to the sycamore when my hand touched a warm muzzle—Barbara's own cob ; his white star showed, as the curtain above our heads was pulled back : saddled too, with a valise strapped to him. I fingered this, wondering ; next moment her step was close behind me and I felt her arms round my neck. "Ah, you've not failed—— !" she whispered.

I turned, too surprised to answer ; and I suppose her lighted window showed me, for she skipped back with a cry. "Who are *you* ?"

"Why, Nick !" said I. "Don't be scared——" I heard the catch of her breath.

"What brings *you* here this time o' night ?" she asked in a changed voice, yet trembling.

"I must see your father" I said.

"You can't. He's from home——"

"I'll await him."

She stamped her foot. At first I think she had been too

startled to know what to say ; but her self-confidence was returning. She cried, angrily : " You can't wait here ! My father's absent till to-morrow, and the maid sleeping at Calderbrig. Go up to Thornholm—to your *friends* ! " And while I stood puzzled that Eldon should have left her alone : " O you boor, you, will you not understand you can't lie here ? It's improper, there's nobody ! "

I said sharply—for heaven knows, I wished nothing to do with her : " Not even anyone to stall your cob ! Or are you two to spend to-night abroad like the rest ? " I saw by now, she was dressed for outdoors, in her long riding-cloak and that pert gipsy-hat which I had cause to remember.

She flared up : " Do you dare meddle in my business—— ? " And stopped, rigid ; for at this instant from the shore we heard the thud of a shot, and a man's distant cry. " O God, Charles—— ! " she gasped. She tugged at me ; next she was running madly down Calderside, myself at her heels.

I glanced back to see if anyone followed us. But there all was dumb and blind, save for her lit window ; Brigadier neighed ; beyond, the moon was climbing out of Eskdale and the ridges were edged with light.

We reached the dunes, and peered round us. Naught here : the sea calm, with a shore-mist : the ebb just receding. I fancied, straining my ears in the dark, I could hear footsteps on the shingle past Caldermouth ; but of this I have never been sure. One sound I heard beyond doubt : a cluck of oars from the mist which clung pale along the rim of the sea ; and soon, pulley-blocks creaking.

Barbara ran towards our barn. I followed ; at the pond-edge the turf felt slape underfoot, and I saw it had been tramped miry. She shrieked suddenly : " Ah Nick, help here—— ! "

Something lay slumped against the barn : a man's great bulk, motionless. She'd raised his head—the eyes closed, the face gray in the moonlight. She whimpered : " Oh, God be thanked, 'tis not he ! " But I'd seen who it was, by this. It was Paradise.

Dead, we thought him at first : so cold and limp he lay with his head in her lap, and my arms round him. There was a lantern muffled under his cloak, smashed, but still warm ; his small-clothes were soaked in blood. But when I found his heart, it beat faintly.

She crouched there, sobbing and thanking God. I bade her curtly to help shift him to one of the plaited hurdles that our

clippers had brought for the sheep ; but when we had him there, she could not lift up her end . . . She stared past me and called : " Charles ! "

Whence he came, I can't tell : maybe along the shore ; or else he reached the house soon after we had run off, and followed us. He stood agape, his horse's rein on his arm. " Barbara—— ? " he jerked out : and advancing towards me, " Who is this gentleman ? "

" Oh " she wept, " 'tis a friend, 'tis my cousin Nicholas—— "

" I'm enchanted " he sneered. Then for the first time he saw Paradise. " God's teeth ! Who's the body ? "

I ordered : " Take that hurdle-end ! We must get up to the house—— " And I'll say this for him, he asked no more questions but flung her his rein and helped me to raise our load. And a sore job we had—without the moon we might never have managed it—to fetch my old friend up Calder, neither jarring nor tilting him in that furlong of whin-roots, brambles, mowdie-heaps and ankle-twisting loose stones.

None of us spoke. Barbara pressed on as fast as she could lead the timorous horse, to ready the place for us. The young man she'd called her Charles had much to keep his feet, on ground so unfamiliar : yet neither stumbled nor flagged. And for myself . . . I think I tried to pray, and whatever ill-turn this old merry scoundrel had done to me was forgotten. I could remember nothing but his dead face as I'd first come on him : and the love that had been between us once : and his shirt clammy with blood.

My cousin had kindled turf, and dragged a mattress to the hearth of the living-room, when we arrived with him. I and Charles cut his clothes away and found a great gashed wound under the short ribs, that had bled much ; now it was clotted, and we durst not bathe it lest it should start again. So we piled blankets on him—his body was mortal cold—and while I blew up the fire, they two conferred in low tones. Presently Charles called : " Where's the next doctor ? "

" Beckermert " said I.

" Tell me the house, I'll fetch him."

Barbara said : " If it is Mr. Limpus, I know—— "

They came and stood over me. Charles asked : " D'ye need our help, Mr. Fleming ? "

" We can do nothing but get him warm " said I. " There's brandy in that recess."

"Not now" put in Barbara. "My father——"

"Take my flask" offered the young man. "We'll send your doctor at once——"

"What, is Barbara going with you?"

"I am going with him" she said, and ran out to the horses. He hurried after her. I heard them jingle away.

All this while Paradise lay senseless; but he stirred once or twice, as the warmth began to soak into him, and when I felt his pulse it was strong. At last his eyelids flickered; he stared up at the rannel. "Yottenfews——?" he breathed.

"Aye, you're in Yottenfews: safe at Yottenfews!"

His glance wavered towards me. His lips moved again. He whispered: "Safe . . . be damned . . ."

I raised him and gave him brandy. But his eyes glazed, and he began to hawk and to choke, and to rattle deep in his gullet. I feared he was dying. However, presently he returned from his swoon, and knew me, and muttered something—but what, I could not make out.

I had been holding him on one arm. Now the fire needed turf and I was at a loss how to see to it, until I thought of pulling a stool over and propping him against that. He lay back, half sitting; his eyes thanked me, and I saw this was what he desired. When I had done the fire I showed him the flask; but he whispered: "Nay, I'll lie still——" Then pausing, as if to collect his strength, he said in a hoarse voice, slowly and very faintly: "Belly full of blood——" And fell mute.

So for a long space I sat watching by him, and expecting the doctor; while the clock tuck-tocked and the pools of moonlight shortened under the window-bays, inch by inch. He was conscious, I fancy; but he spoke only once—he'd heard Brigadier fidget outside. "Where's Eldon?" he whispered.

"He'll be back to-morrow."

"Don't leave me, Nick!" His hand closed feebly on mine. "Oh, swear that! Not for an instant——" And I promised, wondering; for I'd read mortal fear in his eyes.

The doctor arrived alone.

I ran out and helped him off his horse. On the threshold he stopped dead. "*That's* not Eldon Fleming!" says he.

"Why no, sir! What made you expect——"

"I conceive you're a stranger here" he said, and glanced

at me sharply. "No you're not, rabbit us, you're young Nick Fleming, hey? Get me some hot water. I'd heard you were out of Cumberland. Luke-warm will do. Where *is* that uncle of yours?"

"I don't know. Not here."

"Not shot, anyhow. This patient's a friend?"

"He is indeed."

"And who shot *him*?"

"I don't know."

"Who fetched me, then?"

"I don't know that either."

"What a pox of things you don't seem to know——" He was but thirty seconds home from a childbirth, he said, when our summons reached him; and while I warmed the water, he kept grumbling peevishly that so many folk must needs pop into this world, or out of it, in the small hours. Presently he uncovered Paradise, and bidding me hold his bowl, began to swab at the wound. "Cutlass, hey?" he grunted, squinting at me over his spectacles.

"No sir, a pistol ball."

"Fiddlesticks!" says he.

All the same, when he had cleansed the gash and probed into it, he fished out the wreck of a bullet: but so distorted, I'd have hardly guessed what it was. "So-ho!" he says. "This arrived *via* some tough obstacle!"

"I think his lantern deflected it."

"Lantern, hum? Where did he receive the injury?"

"On the shore. He'd the lantern beneath his cloak, by luck——"

"Poxy ill-luck!" he growled. "Well, what have ye done for him—besides the application of this dirty napkin, I mean?"

"Offered him brandy—but he wouldn't swallow any."

"No. He'd more sense than you."

"He'll recover——?" I whispered; Paradise had swooned again, and lay deathlike. The doctor picked up the ragged bullet.

"This missile" says he judiciously, "has broke the wall of the abdomen, but not entered it. He may survive, if he 'scapes vomiting himself to death."

"There's hope then?"

"I am like yourself—I don't know. At least there's nothing more to do, at this juncture. Let the patient keep still and warm,

husbanding his vitality . . . and for the pitiful love of God, let me sleep ! ”

He snored an hour, on the settle. Then with no warning Paradise began vomiting blood. I cried out in panic. The doctor came, and between us we raised him while the fit spent itself. Afterwards, when he had felt the pulse : “ Why, that’s most gratifying indeed ” says he, “ and what I’ve been waiting for. We’ll recover him, never fear ! ”

And certainly, in the next half-hour Paradise seemed to mend. His breath came easier ; his waxy pallor, which had chiefly frightened me, passed ; at last he opened his eyes wide, and his lips moved. “ Me boy——” We both stooped to him. “ Is *he* back ? ” I shook my head.

He whispered : “ Get me away, first——”

“ No. You’ll bide here ” says the doctor.

He muttered more urgently : “ For God’s love, Nicky ! Here’s . . . death . . . ”

“ Fiddlededee ! ” the doctor told him. “ You’re not going to die—but if you’re moved you will, I assure you.” He rose, and began to stow his cutlery in a saddlebag. “ I’ll return during the forenoon ” says he. “ Keep him quiet, you’ve no present cause for apprehension, I think.”

Paradise tugged my finger. I turned back to him. He did not speak, only stared up at me imploringly. Gently, I shook my head. His eyes closed again. He whispered :

“ You’ve condemned me to death . . . ”

XLI

THE DOCTOR had strapped his bag in place, when I ran out to him by the sycamore. “ We’ve *got* to move him ! ” I said.

“ Why ? ”

“ I—I——”

“ To be sure, you don’t know ! And nor do I—it’s not our business. But there’s one thing I’ve noticed, practising on this coast : folk who get midnight bullets in their guts demand to be moved elsewhere, with a most curious unanimity. Further, your uncle is expected back ; and—your uncle’s a magistrate.”

His face was shadowed ; but in his tone, when he spoke of my uncle, there was something that bade me hope. I blurted out :

"Are you his friend—or ours?"

"I was your father's, rest his soul" he said sombrely.

"Oh, for his sake then, help!"

He muttered: "You'll kill him, moving him."

"I've the cob——"

"That's not possible."

"A cart, then?"

"Much worse . . . a horse-litter, maybe: with our two beasts?"

"Oh, show me how!" I implored.

"Well, since you're set on it! Can you find two long poles: and something to make a hammock?"

I darted away. At the shed-end we used to keep a stock of saplings, seasoning for fence-rails. I fetched two, and a waggon-sheet. The doctor had gone indoors. How to secure the sheet I could not think, till I remembered there would likely be a bag of nails in the shed. I groped for them, and the hammer. By the time I had lapped the sheet round both my poles, and firmly clouted it, dawn was gray.

I returned to the living-room. The doctor had rinsed our bowls, stuffed the bloody napkins in the fire, and was on his knees swilling the flagstones. He grinned up at my surprise. "Rot my teeth!" says he: "I'd never thought to be your uncle's char woman; but since we're eloping, this mess tells too clear a tale!" I helped him finish. Only the hearthrug, sodden and caked with blood, we judged too heavy to burn: so decided to take it with us. Paradise lay watching. He'd been forbidden to speak; but I could have wept at the relief and love in his eyes.

We fetched him outdoors: then stood Brigadier and the doctor's cob in line, till we'd worked our poles through their leathers. Lastly, with many an injunction to the patient beasts to stand still, we hoisted Paradise mattress and all and slid him into the sheet—and so set out, each leading his own horse; the strangest party, I dare swear, that you'd have found that morning in Europe; with Paradise monstrous in his wraps, and the hearthrug on Brigadier, and rabbits watching, and a cock crowing at us derisively as we picked our way along Calderside among the stumps of the trees.

At Calderbrig the sun was above the hill, but no chimneys yet smoking. We padded softly through. By and by the doctor hailed me from behind and asked where we were going. I

pointed towards Thornholm. "Two mile yet!" I heard him grumble to himself. "Good lord deliver us——"

But at least there was little fear of meeting any one now, and firm flat turf by the river. About six we reached Thornholm, none there but Hannah—and her face when we called her out in a flannel shift to hold Brigadier's head, is something I'll not forget. Well, we put Paradise to bed, and grievously ill he looked : worse than last night. Hannah made breakfast ; and when she had left us to it : "Damme, we've not killed him, so far anyhow!" says the doctor. "If he lasts through to-day, he'll disappoint his enemies yet : in which case" he went on in a lower tone, "I have some non-professional advice for you, which I hope you will ruminate . . . We came here unseen, d'ye think?"

I said, I felt pretty sure of it.

"Does Fleming know you've returned?"

"Not till I call on him."

"Very well, you reached here last night. You weren't near Yottenfews, your friend neither. If he got shot at all (which maybe will not have occurred, unless he proves it by dying on us) 'twas in some accident outside here——"

"And you'll stand by us?"

"Me? I am like the conjurer in Holy Writ, I've neither part nor lot in this matter. I'm fetched to doctor a sick man—if there is any sick man : mind ye though, this one's not sick till he's dead! Beyond that, I'm like yourself—I know nothing." He leaned forward : "If I did, there's another piece of counsel I'd offer ye : *keep off those beaches!*"

"Beaches——?"

He nodded. "I'm told, there was a young chap found himself in dubious company at Ravenglass, one wet dawn. And I'm told he was also intimate with a person about whom queer things are whispered ; Paradise, I think, was the name."

"So that's out——?" I faltered. He wagged his head.

"Nothing's out. Doctors hear more than's good for them : which they atone, by unremembering half of it and keeping t' other half to themselves . . . Well well, I'll come to-night. Pray for your friend's health, meanwhile ; for I conceive an inquest might be damned embarrassing for all three of us——"

Outside, when I had helped him mount, he stared at Brigadier still tethered there with the bloody rug on his withers. "That's an odd horsecloth your beast wears?" says he, cocking

an eye at me. "I'd discard it, if I were you——" And he jogged off.

I discovered no change in Paradise. He slept, or was in a daze; yet old Hannah seemed content. I told her last night's story in full: which I judged safest, knowing how Will and she liked Paradise and how they abhorred my uncle. She exclaimed: "But, whoivver would shut *him*—an' at Yottenfews of all spots? If they'd shutten Eldon, now . . . and sithee, what was't put him intil sek a sweat of fear, not to let Eldon find him? I'd have said he'd fear nowt!"

I perceived then, whatever the doctor guessed, it did not cross her mind to connect Paradise with the smugglers. So I said merely, that was more than we could tell, and in any case his own business: but could he lie here unrevealed, till his wound mended?

"He'll be missed from t' school" she said.

"I think their holiday is beginning."

She sighed: "Poor lamb, it's a queer sort o' holiday *he's* eddle't hissel' . . . what but, dar zonn, he can lie here forivver if he wants, they'll get nowt out of *uz*!"

I left him in her safe charge. I'd have watched through the afternoon with him, but durst not, for there was still this business of the pack-train to look into. I was pledged to my father and the rest to warn them of its approach; they depended wholly on me. However, I did not after all ride to Yottenfews; the more I pondered it, the less I fancied that job. Eldon's cold eyes, I feared, might fish my very heart and drag up my father's secret.

So below Calderbrig I took the right bank of the river, outside our land, down a sunk lane to the shore. On this bank there is a coppiced bluff, about a quarter-mile from the river-mouth; and the river bends round it. I could see Yottenfews from here, upstream a little; downstream and farther off, the barn sharp against the sea. But the first thing I looked for was our pack-pony troop . . . aye, they were still grazing!

Two men came from the barn—I guessed, the "foreigners" of whom Will had told me, hired to bale this year's clip. They seemed to have finished for to-day, for they were putting their coats on; I watched if they'd fetch the ponies. But after a conference, one of them trailed off towards the beach and I saw him fording the river. Some hovels stood near there (Sea Cow

Field, we called the place : an asylum of vagabonds, or of gypsies) where Will said Eldon's hirelings lodged ; and he headed that way.

The other stopped at the barn. By and by, when he began to walk towards Yottenfews, I knew his gait ; it was Eldon. I stayed a little after he had entered the house, to make sure the ponies were not fetched : then slipped off to Brigadier, and rode inland.

I had seen enough. The packs were ready, or that fellow would not have given over so soon—it was scarce four o'clock. And since Keswick lay no more than six-and-twenty mile away by Sty Head, they'd likely make a one-day march of it, leaving to-morrow. I rode back, satisfied to have learned what I wished without approaching my uncle . . . but there I'd reckoned too soon.

I suppose he rode straight to the village ; for as we topped the hump-back bridge, I encountered him face to face. He reined up, preventing me. "So *you're* back?" says he. "I hear last night you supped in Gosforth."

Thought I : You're kept well-informed——! Aloud I said, civilly as I could manage : "I'm at Thornholm. I hope to wait on you when time serves."

His reply took me utterly aback. He leaned towards me, white with passion. "You ruffian!" cried he. "Where's Barbara?" And without letting me speak : "Oh, 'tis all planned! Last night my affairs hold me in Whitehaven. She sends her maid home to sleep. At dusk, *you* come sneaking. Now she has disappeared—don't lie, sir! You courted her, you had the presumptuous impudence . . . by heaven, if you've abducted her as far as Thornholm even, I'll get you transported! 'Tis a criminal offence, you shall learn!"

I must have seemed the very image of guilt, for I was too astounded to answer. He glared at me, breathing hard, his features twisted by rage. I saw now, his fine white hands were greasy-foul from the wool—a queer job indeed, for him ; but this apart, he was changed since our last meeting. He had lost flesh, his face was lined, his eyes haggard and careworn ; he looked ten years older. And suddenly, for all the disadvantage he had me at, my fear of him fell away. I said coldly : "You are altogether mistaken, sir. I am calling on friends : Rothery, and some others——" And I added, to try what response it struck from him : "Mr. Paradise, if he still visits here——"

"Paradise—aye, I don't doubt he'd a hand in this!" he broke in with an extraordinary bitterness. Then watching me narrowly: "He was to have been with me to-day, but he's off none knows where!"

I said—but I could have laughed to find he'd discovered nothing—"If Paradise is missing too, maybe they're fled together! He was your daughter's fancy and not I, the last I heard of 'em——" Which seemed to stagger him, as much as he had me at the start. He said in a hoarse voice:

"Is that meant seriously, sir—or is it only your impudence?"

I said: "I've no mind to be either serious or impudent about Barbara; she's less than nothing to me. So good-day to you!"

"By God" he said, "you shan't pass——!" I had not known him swear, in all the weeks he had lived with me. The man was outside himself. He raised his cane, and I think he'd have struck at me, had not a diversion occurred.

A ragged-dressed lad on a big horse came thrusting up the slope of the bridge, and jostled into me. "Dost'a know where a Mr. Eldon Fleming lives?" he demanded. I nodded towards my uncle. The boy removed his cap, took out a letter, and handed it. "I was bid give thee this 'un" says he.

I had backed, meaning to reach Thornholm by the other bank of the river; for my uncle still barred the way. But as I wheeled, so strange and sharp a cry escaped him that I looked round. He sat there staring at the open letter, his face like a dead man's. The lad gaped from one of us to the other. At last my uncle raised his eyes, and seeing me watching him: "This—letter—brings word of Barbara" he said. "I find I misjudged you."

I shrugged. "You needn't apologise!"

He said, in a queer lifeless sort of a voice: "I do not apologise——" Then with no further word he turned his horse and headed slowly for Yottenfews, the letter tight in his hand.

When he was out of earshot, I demanded of the lad whence he'd brought it. He answered, a young gent gave it him in Cockermouth to fetch back: and fee'd him, and hired him this horse. I asked had the gentleman a dark girl riding with him. He said aye—and leered at me. "I'd give a week's pay to sleep where yon feller'll sleep to-night!" he confided.

I told him, there was a time when I'd have agreed with him;

then having shown him where the nearest alehouse stood, I continued on my way.

XLII

“YOUR FRIEND” says the doctor after seeing Paradise that same night “enjoys the devil’s luck, and the intestine validity of the elephant ; we have toiled to murder him, but he’ll live.”

It was near midnight ; I suppose he delayed his visit purposely, till past dark. He brought news, too. In Beckermert and Egremont and Calderbrig, it was now common talk that Eldon Fleming’s lass had run off to Gretna Green with a soldier, and she was under age, and her da vowed he’d have the law of this young chap and get him cashiered ; but some said, the abductor was a man of wealth, which would outbalance everything with Fleming of Egremont—or Yottenfews as he now styled himself—when he’d had time to cool off. Meanwhile he was in a parlous stew about her, and the county splitting its sides.

I told the doctor how I had been accused, and acquitted.

“Well well” says he, “I’m glad she troubled to write, or we’d have had him here laiting her . . . d’ye suppose she blabbed anything ?” And he glanced towards the inner room.

“Not she !” I said. “She’d be thinking of nobody but herself.”

“Then good luck to her, and all her sort !” says he. “They do least harm, in the end. . . .”

I sent Hannah to bed, and dozed fitfully beside Paradise. Speech was forbidden ; but I doubt in any case he lacked strength for it, since his journey. He remained all night in a torpor, his eyes closed, but his stomach constant ; however, the doctor had promised me he’d not die—and a great solace that opinion was, since I might not bide with him. Towards dawn I called Hannah to stand watch : and left within the half-hour.

But not for Yottenfews ; I’d no cause. It was plain from my uncle’s manner yesterday, I’d nothing to hope from him : nor nothing to give him, save the news that he should never learn the Lindale secret through me—which I looked forward to assuring him, but not yet. As for his packtrain, I already knew that it was ripe to leave ; the weather was set fair, too ; and since wool must travel dry, he’d not dare miss his occasion. So, to-day or to-morrow—— ?

My nearest point to strike the road was at Gosforth. But he'd eyes there, as I'd discovered ; so beyond Scalderskew I forded Bleng, and kept up-fell till I came out above the brow where the road climbs from that valley. I studied it. The June suns had baked it deep ; and in last winter's ruts, and on the cobbled ridge between, a fine dust lay thickly. No train had passed to-day, nor for weeks likely : the Sty gap was little used. I settled to watch ; soon they'd be visible, if they had left at dawn like myself. Brigadier grazed within the length of his rein. The sun climbed, Black Combe showed hazy with a promise of later heat, the hours crawled by ; and still they did not appear. At last when I began to think they were not starting to-day, I saw what I hoped : a snake of dust descending into Gosforth a mile away, and their buckles twinkling.

I waited. The main road passed Gosforth, and this might not be they. But when the dust-cloud bent inland among the trees by the church, I stayed no longer. No other convoy of such size would take the Wasdale road. I mounted, and set off.

Gosforth clock had chimed nine, some time ago. I had three-quarters of a mile in hand, and the steep brow between us. My way led over open moor with a turf-edge to canter on, as my father foretold. In about half-an-hour I topped a brackeney rise and saw the lake dull beneath me, a great scree shivering down to its far shore from crags that hung in the sky : as Virgil depicts Avernus. And a black hellish sort of lake it seemed to me, even on this bright morning. Over Avernus (Virgil says) no birds dare fly ; I wondered, did they shun this spot too—but as I approached, a jammie-crane rose from the marge and beat slowly towards Wasdale Head, his long neck hunched between his shoulderblades and his stilts trailing ; whose friendly presence heartened me, and took my mind off the two bags of powder and buckshot at my saddlebow, and the business on which I had come.

Beside the lake I was slowed to a walk. Above it, the valley opened out again, less grim, but even wilder : a desert of riverbeds ; no grass but marsh, no trees but stunted useless coppice ; and strewn everywhere with gray stones. Then farther on, a chapel, cowering in its yew-clump ; the smallest in England, said my father, who had told me its roof was timbered with the ribs of a Dane ship. I passed it close, in the lonnin as he had counselled me, to screen myself from the farm. For here there

was cultivation ; they had gathered multitudes of stones off the land near the chapel, to grow hay and to make their sheep winter-pasture ; and the stones they had built up into walls, running all ways. But even then there were so many over, they had piled them at intervals in huge round barrows like the base of a tower. And on all sides a ring of hills, much higher than ours, fenced the hidden valley, sweeping down in long curves—bracken below, gray scree and iron crag above ; and the slow cloud-shadows loitered over them.

I began looking out for the six firs below the foot of the pass, where I should meet Ned : nor had much trouble sighting them, for beyond the church-yews and one or two farm-sycamores there was not a right tree in the valley ; and they stood near where two becks joined. I halted—then heard Ned's laugh, and saw him leaping down the brant fell. "They're on t' road?" was his greeting.

"Aye, at their own gait ; they weren't in Gosforth till past nine."

"What, the lazy liggabeds ! I'd very near given ye up——" He waved a white scarf, standing in the lee of a rock. Far up the fell, from the beck-head between two crests, the signal was answered. "Yon's George" says he. "He'll summon t' others, back of t' fell—they'll be there soon as us."

We set off up the main ravine, taking turns to lead Brigadier. Ned had watched here all yesterday, I learned, in case the train left sooner than my uncle had said : and would have come back to-morrow. "How far behind d'ye reckon they'll be?"

"An hour at least. The road's rough."

We glanced back many times without sighting them. As we climbed towards Sty Head, in blistering heat, the bracken finished and our way slanted up the breast of a fell where scree-shoots had avalanched—a sheeptrack, merely : but my father had bade Ned take this route for its better view of the dale. The packroad lay beyond the stream, now beneath us and parallel, but later zigzagging out of the dead end of the ravine to Sty Head. On our side (but far above) great fans of scree flowed from the precipices of a mountain impending us, which Ned said they called Gavel. At last we came to a flat-headed bastion not much below the crest. The lake had been out of view, some while. But the farmstead showed white and small and marvellous clear, about two miles down : and beside it a crazy-quilt of little green fields, shaped fantastically. Down there among the

maze of walls the vale had seemed barren ; but from above, it glittered like an emerald in its setting of grim hills. We stared long, from this vantage-place. Suddenly Ned pointed. "Sithee ! Yon's dust——"

By and by I'd found it : a faint haze, beyond the chapel. Yet some time passed before we were both sure that it was what we desired. "We've still an hour of them——" I judged.

"Far more ! They'll not pass t' farm, this weather—there's good ale there, thou knows !"

The Sty Head is a V-shaped cleft, in the ridge between Gavel and an opposing precipice whose name I did not discover. Beyond it the pass runs flat for about a mile, then plunges to Borrowdale ; and a small tarn lies in the slack. As we approached this, a voice called on us to "stand and deliver !" We sprang round, and saw the three others grinning at us from behind a great slab. They'd been here long since, they said, and mocked us ; but we told them the train was barely at Wasdale Head and hurrying much less. Then we sat down and shared the meal I had brought, and my father disclosed his tacticks.

What these were, I'll relate as they fell out. Enough now to say, he had us wondering afresh at his knowledge of this wild country, and his provision for everything that could chance. First there was Brigadier to be unpacked, and tethered in a hidden gill lest he should neigh at the ponies. Next we must don the five smocks which I had fetched ; with these, and scarves tied below our eyes and hats crammed down, we'd defy recognition. George charged and primed our weapons—a pair of pistols by Nock, which they'd had at the wars with them : and three fowlingpieces from Thornholm. We were given each his stand, at boulders overhanging the path where the tarn straitened it : my father meting out the spaces between us, so that the first and last of us should spring up opposite the van and tail of the train.

"How many beasts ?" he asked. I thought, two dozen or more : but I had not been near enough to make certain. "What's this year's clip then, Will ?"

Will laughed harshly. "Thou knows, I wasn't trusted with t' weigh-out—his foreigners did all that ! But I doubt we're not up till t' usual." In our parts a pony carries two hundred and fifty pounds—say eighty fleeces to the pack, in a fair year : or more if they weigh lighter. At home, we clipped fifteen hundred ; so our train varied from a dozen ponies to two.

“Let’s say two dozen” proposed my father. “And the men leading ’em?”

Will shrugged. “Two on *us* could have mannished. I don’t know what sort Eldon’s hire’t—but he’ll pay no more nor he must!”

“So we’ll not be outnumbered. I could have wished us a worse day, to keep pedlars off the pass—but then *they* might not have come.” And in this our luck stood, no travellers passed; indeed the Sty was seldom used, save by shepherds; and in Wasdale and Borrowdale they’d held their clips some days ago (my father had ascertained this too) and were unlikely to be up the fell again for the present.

George slipped off to watch the train; but it seemed they had not detached themselves from the farm yet. Just after two o’clock he signalled he’d sighted them; short of three, he walked back. “Get your scarves on” says he, “they’ll be here in ten minutes, they’re climmin’ out of t’ gill——”

“In what strength?” my father asked.

George chuckled. “No strength howivver! I reckon they’re full of ale.”

“But how many are they?”

“Two dozen ponies, three chaps leadin’——”

“Armed?”

“Nowt but sticks. But there’s a fourth chap fetchin’ up their rear with a girt lang thin gun on his back.”

“The longer the better” says my father. “’Twill be more unhandy to aim.”

XLIII

THOSE ten minutes were as awful as I ever spent. We crouched each behind his boulder: my father nearest to the pass, so that he’d rise up opposite the overman who was shepherding their procession. The sun blazed on us, a bee buzzed, the crags beyond Sty Head swam in the heat. I kept remembering very urgently that this was a hanging-job, even if we shot nobody, and felt cold for all my sweating—yet I would not have wished myself elsewhere than under my father’s leadership. And betweenwhiles I thought of Faith, and wondered whether I should see her again.

I stole a look at my neighbours. Will was examining the lock

of his gun, his eyes puckered above his mask. Ned winked at me, and scratched himself like a monkey. I heard a fish jump, below. Then on the pass a sheep gave her sudden whistling cry of fright, like a jay calling. And then came the click of hooves.

They clicked past us, unseen. We continued watching my father. When he stood up we did the same, my throat dry. . . . Yet, now we came to it, the actual holding of the train was the simplest part of our business. At the moment I showed myself, the nearest pony shied at my white scarf and began plunging. The man ahead of it started round ; then seeing my raised gun, not stopping to note how it was wavering, he dropped his stick, dived under the beast's belly and at once took to his heels. You'll judge, he allowed me a cheap victory? Yet remember he'd been hired, not generously, to lead to Keswick for a fixed wage ; and if he demurred at having his brains blown out *gratis*—well, I'll not blame him, for one.

I glanced round. His friends had shown themselves no more valiant. Only their overman reached for his long gun in its sling ; but when he found us all levelled at him, he flung up his hands and scuttled after the rest. " Out ! " cried my father.

The ponies blocked their way past the tarn. Backward, I doubt they did not fancy leaping down the brant path they'd just climbed. So they went plunging frantick through the boggy ground at the tarn-head ; and we five followed . . . I may say, at this point only did our plan deviate. We'd meant, after disarming them, to conduct them two miles over a high gap to the east and enforce them down into Langdale ; now they broke that way to please themselves, with no instruction from us—yet the man with the gun might still do one or two of us a mischief, if we gave him leisure to aim. He was behind the others : with George, first of us to cross the bog, not much behind him in turn. As they began to breast the fell, George shouted : " Drop thy gun or I'll drop thee ! " The man glanced back, saw George within pistol-shot, and flung it down without stopping. My father laughed close to me : " They're ours—— ! "

George rammed his pistol in his pocket, and picked up the gun. My father snatched mine. " Awa' back till t' job, you three ! " he shouted in a bucolick voice, and sped after George. Ned and Will joined me ; and together we watched the pair of them, now with a gun and pistol each, chase Eldon's men up the fellside. " By jing, your father'll mak' them sweat afore they're finished ! " Will vowed.

So our plan reshaped itself. We three remained to take up our allotted task, which was the care of the ponies ; while they two stimulated the drivers towards Langdale, though at a hotter pace than foreseen. Indeed the fugitives were still in full career when they vanished over the crest ; but they had drunk deep at Wasdale (as George discerned, from the way they toiled up the Sty) and we'd no fear but when they'd run themselves to a *non plus*, they'd be as biddable as my father and George could desire.

We ploughed back, through the soft ground. The ponies had tied themselves in a rare knot—some on the track, some in the tarn, some bogged knee-deep : but quieter since we left them. Will slipped from beast to beast, petting and calming them as none could but he, till they were straightened out and we assured ourselves that the halters were still intact (we link our pack-trains continuous, each pony's halter plaited in the tail of the one which precedes him.) Will glanced up and down the empty pass. " We munna bide here, lads ! " says he. " Yon's our road home——" And he pointed aloft.

There were two ways from Sty Head to Ennerdale : and no path on either. We could skirt Gavel at our present height, and in an hour attain the slack between that fell and the next, whence George had waved us this morning : beyond which saddle, a steep grass descent would bring us down near the hut. But on this course we should be visible from Wasdale till we crossed Gavel scree—the farm itself no farther than a mile and a half below, and some of our ponies white, and the sun full on us—a discovery not to be risked. The other way was to strike up directly from the tarn to a high gap, back side of Gavel, keeping the mountain interposed between Wasdale and us ; and from this gap to Ennerdale was like the former route, a half-hour of easy walking. But to win the gap was what bothered us.

Will said it could be done, he'd studied it yesterday : and in any case we durst not stop here. We began up the open fell, beside a beck which came down arrow-straight from the gap ; but the gill deepening, we were driven more and more into the bed of the beck, till our way soon became a staircase of smooth boulders less fit for ponies than goats. Only one thing favoured us ; the packs had been baled small, nothing near the size we used to make them ourselves. At our first halt I grumbled : " If they'd baled right, we'd have had less beasts to handle ! " But Will said nay, it was a god-be-thanked job they'd made

them so small or we'd never have got one beast up. He admired further at the way the packs were secured, with a very sailor-like lashing. "They've done their best for us" says he. "All t' same, what made them pack so small—well, that beats knowledge!" I asked had he recognised any of the men; he said he had no acquaintance with Whitehaven trash, nor wished none; yet I kept on remembering the face of the tall man with the gun, for I felt I'd seen him before.

It was less than three-quarters of a mile from tarn to gap, Will promised us. We had long ceased to credit this, for the time it took us seemed endless. However by main force and coaxing, and with many a wind-about to avoid spots where a pony could break its leg, we got up at last. Beyond, our straight descent was by a causeway of boulders, easy to step for us, but with such frequent crevices that we dared not venture it for the train. We escaped it by traversing a scree to our right, keeping to our same level; and on this shivery sidelong stuff the ponies went better with their four feet than ourselves. The scree fetched us to grass: down whose long slant we could now spy the hut in Ennerdale, far beneath us.

"And the rest's nowt!" says Will. "If thou's a mind, turn back an' wait thy father; Ned and me'll mannish now."

So I returned to the gap. I could look down from here on to the crest the fugitives had crossed; beyond it lay a high valley with another tarn; and beyond that again an opening between the fells, which I supposed led towards Langdale. It was now close on five o'clock; and for near two hours I lay watching vainly for the others to reappear. At last I sighted them, by the higher tarn—Sparkling Tarn, Will said it was called—running down towards Sty Head. Soon they had crossed our ambush-place and were clambering up the gill at a good speed, where we had laboured so painfully. But sometimes they halted; and I saw presently, this was to gather droppings which the ponies had left and to spill them in crevices, so that if any later search were made our retirement should not be traced. They reached me, and flung themselves full-length.

"All's well?" says my father.

I nodded. "They're down, long ago. How did *you* fare?"

He told me, in high spirits. "Egad, we ran them without a check from where we left you to the high tarn—they durstn't stop! They reckoned, our sole reason for pursuing 'em was to ensure a dead shot; we'd a barrel each for them, d'ye see,

with our pistolets, and they carried nothing but the ale in their bellies. At the tarn, one of them fell senseless, and the others sank to their knees . . . go on, George, tell him the rest of it ; I want breath to laugh ! ”

George took up the story. “ Says the tall feller, ‘ Shut us and be done with it ’ says he, ‘ we’re finished, ye’ve burst our hearts ! ’ But your da tell’t him, ‘ We’re not shuttin’ ye ’ says he, ‘ if ye keep movin’. Souse your friend’s head an’ fetch his senses back, an’ step out ! ’ ”

“ We mistrusted ” my father said, “ if we stopped long, they’d see your ponies making up for Windy Gap—’tis terrible plain, from there.”

George resumed : “ So in a bit, when they’d recover’t their chap, we set off agen, drivin’ them hard as they could pelt uphill an’ down till we come out above Langd’le : mebbe two mile. There’s a sharp drop there, off of a craggy edge, it looks like ye could toss a stone intil t’ valley. ‘ Down ye go ! ’ says your father. One o’ them begun yowlin’. ‘ Down there ? ’ says he. ‘ Ye’ll brak’ our necks—— ! ’ I think he’d nivver been on a fell in his life. But when your father raised t’ lang gun at ’em, and pee’d his eye to tak’ aim, they were down t’ crag like squirrels. T’ Maister calls after ’em : ‘ This girt lang gun’ll shut a mile downhill ’ he says ; ‘ so keep on ! ’ And by gox they did howivver ! When they near’t bottom, half-an-hour below, they dropped in t’ bracken where they mebbe fancied we couldn’t see ’em, and ligged like the dead.”

My father concluded : “ We took off our stifling masks : and stayed an hour, to make sure they’d neither double back on us nor press down Langdale for help. But it’s two mile before a farm ; and as for climbing up again, I think they’d die sooner . . . eh well, we’ve had a rattling day ! ”

So in the mellow evening we three ran down into Ennerdale. Far beneath, tiny round the hut, we could see the ponies collected, and Will and Ned carrying the packs indoors. I asked my father what we’d do with all the fleeces—for we’d never dare sell them, marked with our Thornholm smit, a red stroke down the far shoulder.

“ Why, wash them and spin them where we are ! ” says he. “ Did I not tell thee I’d learned spinning in Seatoller ? ’Twill be an occupation for these next months, to keep me from further mischief——” he smiled. “ My hands from picking and stealing, my tongue from evil-speaking and slandering of thy uncle—a

sin to which I'd be prone. And the spun-yarn will fetch a good price from the weavers at Ambleside, this back-end."

George Huthwaite kept entertaining us with mimicry of the drivers, imploring less speed : and in particular of "yon girt Manxman, him with t' lang thin gun——"

"Manxman?" I exclaimed.

"Aye, I'd say that was what he'd be, from his voice——" And in a flash I knew the answer to a question which puzzled me, this long while ; for I remembered now where I had encountered him—yet resolved to keep mum on it at present, for that secret was not mine. . . .

Towards sunset we reached the hut. The bales were stacked from floor to roof, save two or three to serve as seats at the meal which Ned was preparing ; and in this interim my father must needs open one, to inspect the quality of his clip. He pulled out half-a-dozen fleeces, and then : "Hey, what's this?" says he.

Snug in the fleeces lay an oiled-silk package, a foot square and two foot long. We dragged it out, wondering : and then a second, from the other end of the bale. My father slit his, and stared. "By the lord!" he exclaimed. "Our sheep have been wearing Brussels lace——!" For so it was : lace, packed firm and tight : scores of yards of it.

We flung ourselves at the other bales. Mine had tobacco for its core : Will's, lace again : Ned's, many a dozen little bags of tea in the protecting skin : George's, two hundredweight more tobacco. We stood each beside his several find, like Joseph's brethren, past speech.

At length : "So this was brother Eldon's clip!" says my father in a queer hushed voice. "And this the reason why the bales were heavy and small—and packed in the sea-barn—and our lads never let handle 'em : and why he markets 'em to Keswick by the solitude of Sty Head——!"

Will asked : "Is there no brandy?"

"You forget" says my father gravely, "he has his principles. He'd never countenance that!"

Suddenly, he began to laugh. And soon we joined in, our astonishment dissolved into mirth. We crowed, we wept, we bowed ourselves whooping. The great crags flung back our noise at us, as though they shared the jest ; and the ponies raised wondering heads.

In the end : " Nick, thou'rt the scholar " gasps my father wiping his eyes. " What did Noll Cromwell say before Dunbar ? "

But I could not tell him.

" Then I'll tell thee. He said : ' This day hath the Lord delivered him into our hands—— ! ' "

XLIV

WE IN our innocence had thought that when we reached the hut, we'd be finished ; we'd been stirring since dawn. Now, no such hope. Our first need was to get the ponies away : thereafter, to use our advantage—but in this the health of Paradise must be waited on ; for if any one could uncover the mystery of the contraband, it was he.

While we ate we debated, but not long ; my father drove us to bed. " This needs some thought " says he. " I'll call ye when I am ready——" He remained smoking in the doorway, his gaze fixed on Pillar Stone, while the last light drained from the sky. . . . In a few minutes, as it seemed, he was shaking us. " Up, lads ! Will, bide with me, I've some instruction for thee while they ready the ponies."

It was starry outside : short of eleven, as I guessed, for the moon gave no sign yet. Presently Will joined us, with Rake on the lead. " Ready ? " says he. " Then march, we mun be at Calderbrig afore daylight——" At once we set off down the vale with the ponies : Rake much unwilling, when he saw my father was left. As we neared Broad-water, the moon swam up behind the ragged Stone and lit us over the fell. George and Rake left us above Thornholm where the drift-road begins ; but we stayed for them, halfway to Calderbrig, till the moon showed them overtaking us with some score sheep. Will chuckled : " Thou knows, two dozen ponies tells too plainish a tale—but the sheep'll cover our traces ! "

Near the main road we loosed the ponies : where they'd be glad enough, poor beasts, to rest and graze for as long as they were let be. Rake turned his regiment ; and we made back for Thornholm—walking like men in sleep, for we were at the end of our strength ; yet jubilant, since we had beat dawn by half an hour.

By Thornholm we set the sheep up-fell and flung ourselves in the bracken. " Rest thysen, Geordie ! " Will invited ; but

George shook his head. "I durstn't, I'd sleep all day——" and he plodded doggedly on . . . The sun was high ere we three woke. We trailed into Hannah's kitchen. "So ye're back!" says she grimly.

I asked how Paradise did.

"Mendin'——" She shrugged, and went on stirring her pot.

"What's to eat, woman?" inquired Will after a pause; we were half dead for hunger. She did not turn.

"Ye've time to eat, then! What's kept ye?"

"Cragfast sheep. A rare job we've had on't——"

"Rare eneuf, I'd say! Cragfast in Calderbrig—or in Egremont, was't?" And we fell guiltily silent: perceiving, she had been up with Paradise and had spied our return. Yet Will must brazen it out:

"Calderbrig? Yon flock—oh aye, we'd had *them* to Calderbrig——"

"Gettin' 'em shod, eh? But ye found t' smiddy shut—gan on, gan on, let's hear t' story!" Then she swung round at us. "I'm soft, eh? I'm not to be trustit, eh? But there's one thing I'll tell *thee*, William Rothery, afore thou eats in this house. Thou'd a fourth lad with thee, went up Calderside—an' I'd ken yon lang-bottom't walk o' his at a mile off! George Huthwaite, or else his ghost——!" She searched our eyes; she leaned and peered at us in turn over the long table; we sat dumbfounded. Suddenly, she broke down and wept. "Dear God! If our Geordie's livin', the Maister's back? Let's have t' truth, Will!"

He rose, and with a clumsy tenderness put his arm round her. "What, thou thought I was wenchin'——?"

"O Will, Will!" she sobbed. "Let's hear t' blessed truth——!"

I left them telling her, and tiptoed in to find Paradise. He lay asleep, so marvellous peaceful and improved as I could hardly believe. While I sat thankful, my eye lighted on a packet inscribed to me.

This was from Isaac, promising to ride north promptly: meanwhile if Bigrigg fell into the market I was to buy, for so much. It would fetch less, he thought, from any local iron-master the way charcoal now was; yet he'd skin none in their adversity (not even Eldon Fleming, he added) so I need not

stint his said price . . . but before reading Isaac's, I gladdened myself many times with the letter Faith had enclosed ; wherein iron was never mentioned.

At last I put them both away, and glanced up to find Paradise watching me. " Dear lad, dear lad—— ! " he sighed. And then : " Good news from Lindale, hey ? "

" Good news, everywhere—— " I longed most eagerly to divulge him the miracle of my father's return : and hardly less, to dig out his own story. But I durst not endanger him with such affairs, till I'd the doctor's permission. So I told him of Lindale, and the happiness to which he had sent me there, though unwitting. His eyes blinked.

" Unwitting be damned . . . " Presently he asked : " Where's Barbara ? "

I informed him, she'd fled with a young chap who helped me carry him to Yottenfews, three nights back. He nodded :

" My *deux ex machina*——we'll drink his health, when I can ! Does Eldon know ? "

" Aye, and charged me with stealing her."

" Gadslife, that I'd been there—— ! " He listened avidly, while I described how Barbara's messenger interrupted us, and how Eldon took the news, and how he'd rode away down Calderside in a cold passion with the letter clutched in his hand ; at which old Paradise fell into such a laugh that I began to wish I'd kept silent. "*Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit !*" he gasped, till the tears filled his eyes and a spasm of pain checked him. " Me boy, you'll murder me yet ! I'm forbid to eat, drink or be merry——and the last's hardest ! But I'll live, despite ye all ! "

My curiosity overpowered me. I leaned towards him. " Oh, who *did it* ? " I urged. He made his face a mask.

" Some ill-wisher, doubtless. Maybe an exciseman——"

" It was no exciseman, or he'd have stopped with you ! By heaven, it was——" But he broke in :

" Me boy, whoever it was his name is locked in my bosom——or in my belly, I should say, since that's where his greeting lodged." He closed his eyes, and lay mute.

I whispered : " My uncle wondered much next day, what had become of you——"

" Well " says Paradise, " he may wonder. . . ."

He slept, or feigned to sleep. I left him, satisfied against my will that I'd wring no more from him for the present. Ned was

in Calderbrig. Will, busy now above the house with a sick sheep, was still being questioned by Hannah : who must hear every detail of the Master—how he looked, how he was provided for, and what he planned to do next. We had told her nothing of the contraband ; and her whole argument was to prevail with us to ship him away to Man.

“ What, he’s fine where he is ” growled Will.

“ Oh aye, till t’ weather breaks or mebbe he’d fall sick—what’ll ye do then ? It’s in Man he should be—there’s plenty Jacobies awridly there out o’ Lancashire, t’ doctor’s tellin’ us. He says they’ll bide till t’ Governmint’s proclaimed a what’s-this, an Identity ; then they’ll can all sail back.”

Will winked at me. “ Gox, aye ! ‘ There’s more sails in an’ out o’ Man nor t’ Governmint knows on ” he said ; and went on tending his sheep.

The doctor came in the evening. Outside, I asked if we might question Paradise about the hurt he’d received, for he’d told nothing. The doctor quizzed us. “ What d’ye want him to tell ? ”

I hinted, this mystery was tangled with deeper things which concerned us much to unravel. Says he :

“ If he won’t talk, ’tis not the perforation of his stomach that’s stopping him ; but maybe *I’ll* stir him up——” So presently, when he had dressed the wound and promised to call again, he asked us what we made of all this hey-bey in Calderbrig about the pack-train being robbed.

“ What, ours ? ” cried Will, aghast. “ We’ve heard nowt on’t ! ”

“ You surprise me ” the doctor said.

It seemed, the ponies arrived home before dawn, untended, without their packs : no person hearing them pass through Gosforth, strange to relate : and what was less strange, Eldon melancholy-mad (the doctor continued cheerfully) since he’d now lost not merely his absconding daughter but his year’s clip as well . . . I watched Paradise from the window-bay ; and his eyes stood out of his head.

Says Will, lugubrious : “ I warn’t him not to send t’ train through Borrerd’le ! They’re a wild lot, back there——” The doctor shrugged.

“ ’Tis thought, the ponies never reached Borrowdale but were stripped by their drivers, who are missing also : sailor-men, I’ve been told.”

"I warn't him agen them an' all—but he kenn't better. Eh, dear dear!"

"What will he do?" said I.

Dr. Limpus laughed. "Invoke the terrors of the Law—but on whom? The wool's gone, the men are gone. He's gone himself, within a half-hour of receiving the news—riding to Wasdale, as some say, or as others, to Keswick—with a most Mazeppa-like expedition. But he'll learn nothing, neither there nor here, except the ponies could speak."

I put in, watching Paradise: "And the truth is locked in their bosoms——"

"Well, well" says the doctor, making for the door, "'tis a damned wicked world, though intermittently comical. Good-night t'ye all!" He wound his muffler round his hat, for a thin rain was now falling; and with a nod to Paradise (who lay speechless) and a wink for myself and Will, he took his leave.

We remained: dumb, for we were resolute that we'd force Paradise to speak first. After some minutes he said—and the words sounded wrung from him: "These are—momentous news!"

"Why yes, to Eldon" I agreed. "*We'll* miss no sleep for 'em. Hey Will, let's to bed!"

Will glanced towards the kitchen. "T' wife's gone awrididy; fair tire't out, she is . . . eh but, ye're mendin' fine, Mr. Paradise! She'll not need fash hersel' any more." He began to unlace his boots, and I to light us a candle, making it as long a job as I could. Paradise watched us narrowly—but I think he already smelt our plot; for his old wits were needle-sharp, wound or no wound. At last: "What do ye—know?" he breathed.

"Why, not much more than you, I think" said I. And Will added:

"Locked in our buzzums——"

He surrendered. "Will, Nick! For the love of mercy! I—I'm at your command!" he promised us.

"We shall hold you to that" said I.

And we gave him the full story.

XLV

IT WAS dark outside, long before we were done. He heard us in dead silence. Only when we had told him of my father's return, and of Ennerdale, and reached the ambushing of the train, his face relaxed and he lay smiling and chuckling to himself. At length :

"Lads, lads" he sighed, "ye've eased as heavy a load from me as ye did from the ponies—hey, bless your rascal hearts for these news!"

I reminded him: "You owe *us*——"

"Yes indeed" he nodded; and muttered one of his old tags: "ἡ γλῶσσ' δμῶμοκ', ἡ δὲ φρήν—" 'The Tongue hath sworn, but Conscience is unbound'—since ye know the secret already!" He raised himself; we leaned close, eager for his side of the tale, when suddenly from the shuttered window a sound interrupted us, and we swung round in guilty fear.

A small, faint sound it was—a jike, we call it in our parts—made by a wet finger rubbed across the pane: the way our courting lads warn their lasses. Will and I exchanged looks. He rose, and padded off in his stocking-feet to the kitchen. The yard-door opened and shut; I heard some whispering. He returned with my father.

"What, yon was t' doctor!" he was saying. "Nobody comes here, else."

"Confound him!" my father laughed. "He's kept me soaking in the bracken, an hour!" Then he turned towards the bed. And bowing: "I conceive, Mr. Paradise? They've prepared you for this untimely visitation, I hear."

The old fellow answered simply: "Sir, I have been honoured with your confidence—sir, I am deeply proud!"

My father stooped, and with a beautiful tenderness kissed the frail hands. "My son owes more to you than we shall easily repay, sir" he said.

They talked a little. And a most blessed thing it was, to me who watched, to mark the esteem and joy with which these two made acquaintance. I removed our candle across the room; and presently, for the greater security, my father sat himself in a deep high-backed settle beside the hearth which screened him

even from us. He said : " Will hints, you've some words for us. I pray I may hear them too ? "

So at last Paradise unburdened himself . . . I'd report him in full, but I doubt this were tedious ; for he talked slowly and hardly, with many a rest to get his breath, being still weak ; and often he stopped for laughter. The tale went back to that December night seven months ago, when I surprised his intercourse with the smugglers ; and he reminded me, he'd confessed then he stood as agent to a principal who remained aloof and secure—my uncle, as we now knew. Eldon it was whose subtle brain had organised the running-trade into West Cumberland : Eldon, whose spies in Man helped him exterminate his rivals by betraying them to the Excise : Eldon, who used the authority thus gained to send the excisemen where he fancied : Eldon, whose need for scapegoats to maintain his credit had ensnared the Ravenglass smugglers : Eldon, who had committed some of those poor dupes to the assize and to death.

" And your part ? " we asked.

" His bawd ! He never appeared——" Paradise fixed prices, bought the stuff in Man, re-sold it in Cumberland—at Keswick, Carlisle, Wigton, Cockermouth—wherever the goods were sent : a kittle business at first, but growing safer as their method achieved perfection. "*Vires acquirit eundo*" he said. " We thrive by success. The more extensive our monopoly, the simpler our task was : till we had the trade in our pocket. And mark ye, of all the dozens on our pay-book, none knew our principal's identity save myself here, and a certain shipmaster there in Man—you met him at Fleswick, Nick."

I nodded. " And on Sty Head, again. 'Twas my remembrance of his ugly face gave me the clew to your secret."

" Aye. He stood deputy for *me*, on that trip——"

His tale shifted to Yottenfews . . . Eldon's design was not for the farm's sake only, but for the vantage of Caldermouth : a safe beach, with our lands adjoining it and the old barn as a store. " Oh, he was shrewd ! He dovetailed gain into gain. From your adversity he snatched his chance to win Yottenfews ; which if won, brought a triple profit—your oaks, to stave off the evil day at Bigrigg : your lands and sheep to refurnish him, if Bigrigg failed after all : your foreshore, for what he fetched out of Man. And not least, Nick's services to steal the coke-secret for him—either *gratis*, or as ransom for Yottenfews, or as the price of marrying his daughter if the wind blew that way. He

turned mere accident to account ; when they fired his great house, he took occasion to transplant himself into Nick's ; when he'd prevailed with Nick to undertake his mission to Lindale, he enjoyed here as free a regency as though the place were his own——”

He asked me, did I recall a dinner-party at Yottenfews when our talk turned on contraband ? I said aye, we'd spoke of how the owlers smuggled wool out of Sussex, as well as foreign stuff in. Paradise nodded. “ From those chance words, he hatched a further scheme to duplicate his ship's profit. I was dispatched to spend my Easter holiday in Man, adjusting this new venture ; and in due course (you now away at Lindale, Nick) he transferred his clip to the shore——”

“ Gox on ! ” Will swore suddenly.

“ Me boy, the bulk of that clip went to Flanders three nights ago, by the same vessel which had brought your Sty Head treasure—the train left yesterday, hey ? ” He nodded to himself. “ Then I suppose the Manxman and himself spent all the previous day, making up the false bales. I'll wager, they sweat at it—but the secret was not to be divulged to none, not even to his three drivers. I should have lent a hand myself, had I been serviceable : but was not. . . .

He broke off. He rested awhile. We waited, in taut suspense ; for of the wound which robbed them of his services, he had told nothing. Presently he resumed :

“ You'll ask me, God knows, what sort of friend I've been to Nick, abetting such villainy ? I've asked myself it, many a time these seven months. Before, my conscience had lain easy, for I count smuggling honester than most trades. It kept my wits alive, what's more ; and I'd pledged myself into Eldon's service ; and for all his frugality, he paid *me* well and trusted me if he trusted none else ; and I admired him—I have hated him always, but the admiration balanced that. Then after Christmas, I began to question his integrity towards Nick——”

He turned to my father. And very earnestly : “ Sir, you've shown yourself generous—I beg you, put yourself in my place. I was most resolute to intervene if he planned treachery—but, damn it, did he ? I knew him better than anyone ; yet even I was unsure. The more I pondered him, the more one certainty emerged : that without him Yottenfews must be lost. If he chose, he could save it ; no power else could. Very well, thought I : bankrupt of all better hope, we must grant him a long credit !

What I could do, I did. I pressed my company on Nick, I climbed into Will's friendship; I wooed—my one success, perhaps—the repulsive love of his child. I spent each spare hour at Yottenfews, where I might watch all that happened. Ye'll retort, I kept thick with Eldon too—in his smuggling, I mean? Why, sure I did: partly because if I broke with him now, I'd have less clew to his mind; partly because, if he did mean honestly, his increased wealth might prove Nick's salvation. So I abetted him still. Only I vowed, if I once found him aiming to harm Nick——!" The old man sighed heavily. "He proved too subtle for me, though—and I'll maintain, I'm no innocent! The fellow held all the cards—wealth, brains, authority at home, favour at Westminster—and did not need to expose them. My doubts hardened towards certainty; yet I remained uncertain, to the very hour that he struck. . . ."

He shook his head. "Forgive me, Nick, if ye can——" I moved over to sit by him; I could not trust myself to find words. Will growled: "Sek talk——!" and rumbled oaths in his beard. My father spoke from the shadows: "You mistake, sir, if you think Nick feels anything towards you but love——" Paradise went on:

"A week back, that was. He did not trouble to tell it me. I read it in the *Gazette*. Next evening I called on him. The greatest venture we had ever risked was now imminent: a freight of contraband into Caldermouth, and the other of wool to ship back. 'You've arranged everything?' says he.

"'For the last time' I told him.

"He stared. 'I don't follow you, Mr. Paradise.'

"'Nor you don't lead me, from this out!' I assured him . . . I protest I'm not easy shocked where my own profit's concerned; but his baseness had shattered me, and I gave him all of my mind. I informed him, there were dishonest scoundrels and honest ones, and he could henceforth find one of his proper kidney to work with him, for I'd not.

"'You ruffian' says he, 'do you renege me? Will you leave the ship on my hands?' She was due in forty-eight hours.

"I said: 'I'm not your sort, I keep faith. I'll see these cargoes safely in and out, and the stuff sold in Keswick; but that's my *ultimum*. . . .'"

Now in telling us these last events, old Paradise discovered a gravity I'd not guessed in him, nor have known since. Then, suddenly, he was chuckling.

"I'm a fool, Nick!" says he. "By the high gods, I'm over honest . . . d'ye see, my intent was to finish faithfully, and then part company once for all: which he accepted (as I thought) for he said nothing further. When the night came he took care to absent himself, as his rule was. I lit the boats in; I received the cargo; and warehoused it; I saw the woolpacks aboard. I'd locked the barn, when a man moves out of its shadow; and I've no more than time to hold the lantern in front of me, but he gives me his charge point-blank."

We sat horrified. "Eldon, was't?" Will whispered. Paradise shook his head.

"Where does *he* say he spent that night?" he inquired. I told him, Whitehaven. "Then be sure, Whitehaven it was: and with witnesses. His Manxman deputised, I believe."

"But—why must *he* murder you?"

"Fear, Nicky, fear! The fount of all our shabbier acts. I surmise now, he feared I would betray his running-trade to avenge *you*—which I'd never meant; for that trade at any rate had not harmed *you*."

"But he maffed it, howivver!" objected Will. "Say thou'd been found dead outside t' barn next mornin'? There'd be sharp questions ax't!"

"You forget, we were interrupted" says Paradise. "If not, my *corpus vile* would have been locked safe in the barn, and either buried on the shore or disposed of among the mountains——" He laughed. "Hey, you might have unpacked *me* in Ennerdale, had Nick not come when he did! But one thing's sure; if I'd remained at Yottenfews till Eldon arrived, my recovery had been—dubious."

My father mused: "And you'd peach not a word about this crime till you found we'd solved it already? By heaven, Mr. Paradise, you told my brother no less than the truth when you said that wrongdoers were of two kinds . . ."

By and by, after we had made him rest, he began to question us in his turn. Was the stuff safe in Ennerdale? Did we leave traces at Sty Head, which Eldon's diligence could spy out? Had we any word of the Manxman? We assured him on the first points; as for the Manxman, we were all agreed that having bungled his job, he'd scuttle home and have more sense then reinsert his nose in so perilous an embroilment. "Why then" says Paradise, "let me once get my health again, I'll market the stuff for ye. Keswick's our open door."

"I'd as lief have no part in such affairs" doubted my father.

"Sir, you shan't need. What you've obtained is the whip-hand of this sly brother of yours. The fiscal element—since it were sin and shame to leave such harvest unreaped—you may trust obscurely to me!"

Will's fingers closed on my arm. "Keep talkin'——!" he whispered. He rose, ran swiftly in his stocking-feet to the door, and suddenly snatched it open. On the threshold my uncle stood.

He was mired to the thighs, as though he had ridden far: and his face pallid. He towered leanly above Will. Next instant, thrusting him aside, he sprang forward into the room. His eyes blazed at Paradise. "So it's here you skulk, sir!" he cried. "I'd guessed it, by heaven——"

My father stood up into the candlelight. "It's here we all skulk, brother!" he said amiably. "Pray make yourself at home."

XLVI

I SAW Will lean forward and pluck out the pistol from the skirts of my uncle's coat.

He must have felt its weight removed: but paid no heed, only continued staring at my father, voiceless, like a man shocked suddenly from his sleep. At last he turned to find Will standing between him and the door, his own weapon aimed at him. He said, with a kind of taut disdain: "If you intend to murder me, your numbers can give you courage——" For Will had raised the cock, and looked as though nothing would please him more.

"Murder you, Don?" My father opened his blue eyes very wide. "Odslife, you're the person in all Cumberland I've been most anxious to meet, but knew not how to contrive it . . . Nick, a chair: where's your manners, lad? . . . You'll drink, Don? Nay I forgot, your principles—you have your principles, brother!" He offered no explanation of his presence, nor did Eldon once ask. I pushed out a chair; but Eldon remained standing, his hatbrim shadowing his eyes which watched my father continually. By and by, in a curt cold voice:

"I have nothing to say to you."

"Your deeds speak more than words" nodded my father.

"But at least you'll let me profess some gratitude for the way you've safeguarded Nick? I've admired your brains always, Don; it was a master-thought, to get our lands given *you* . . . so that when you'd re-gifted 'em to Nick, after some prudent interval, his possession could not be challenged." His tone remained urbane: friendly, any stranger had inferred. But they watched each other like fencers. Eldon said, guardedly:

"I'm glad you are sensible of what I have done; others have judged me harsher. But 'tis late, we'll confer to-morrow."

"To-night!" my father returned quietly, but with an edge to his voice. "This weather's not fit to turn any dog out of doors. Besides, you came to please yourself; you won't complain if we require you to—skulk here, along with us."

"*Require*, sir—on my own property?"

My father looked past him. "Require our guest to take a seat, Will! He'll be here for some time." Eldon faced round.

"I'll have you hanged, my man, if you continue to threaten me with that weapon; and I'll stand or sit as I choose——" But he sat down, for all that. My father lit his pipe, and resumed:

"I was complimenting your stewardship . . . I'm told, you've marketed the bulk of our clip more shrewdly than we'd have done; and the rest you've transferred to *us*, to dispose of as we think fit! We received it with gratitude—on Sty Head yesterday, I mean——" I heard my uncle catch his breath; but he said nothing. "Nay, with more than gratitude: for we found, searching for your invoice, you'd included the rent too. I have invoiced that for myself——" He drew out a paper, and in the same quiet tone began to recite from it: "*Item*: tobacco, about 30 cwt. (you'll pardon us, we'd no scale) the same being taxable at 20 guineas per cwt., more or less. *Item*: tea, 12 or 13 cwt., taxable at 27 guineas per. *Item*: Brussels lace, about 5 cwt., taxable . . . but I infer, all this consignment is tax-free? A most princely gratuity!"

"Your informer has served you well" my uncle snarled, with a murderous glance towards old Paradise.

"Oh believe me, he had no hand in this transaction—nor couldn't, if he had wished: being disabled by some accident, on which we find him too dark."

"You treacherous ruffian!" cried my uncle. "Do you fix that on me? I was——"

"Sir" returned Paradise, "*qui facit per alium, et caetera*—but your fustilarian missed his aim."

"That's apart from the point" my father said. "We're here to draw up a settlement."

Eldon shrugged. "I am here perforce; but you may put your case, if you please——" He regained some of his composure: and professed an indifference under which, I felt, he was now bracing all his subtlety to elude the snare he was in. He paused; then snatching the initiative before my father could speak: "Your friend" he sneered "leads you to hope that you can pin this smuggling on me; but you'll find I stand clean of it, whereas he's in to the hilt!"

"Conversely, you've stood so clean of it" commented my father "that there's only your word against *him*—or d'ye think the Manxman will help you?"

Eldon laughed scornfully.

"You are pretty innocent, my dear Jack. In such affairs (I blush to admit it, as a magistrate) the scale of justice dips inexorably towards the litigant who——"

"The defendant" corrected my father.

"Towards the—the party who is better fortified by his status and wealth."

My father shook his head. "Your status rests on your suppression of smugglers; but it seems they've been busy after all—and on your land, of all spots. It was not Mr. Paradise who repaired your barn: nor whom Nick saw, baling. I agree wealth might outweigh evidence—but, whose wealth? I'm curious, brother. The wealth of Yottenfews is its wool: some of which you've presented to ourselves, while some remains as a bad debt in Man till Mr. Paradise collects payment. Then there's your contraband—more lucrative; but at present we hold that too. Lastly, Bigrigg . . . will Bigrigg fetch enough to buy you immunity, when it comes under the hammer?"

He whitened; he had not supposed we knew of Bigrigg's collapse. My father pressed his advantage: "You deceive yourself, hoping you can narrow down this issue to Paradise. You have fallen in your own pit. You've the witness of Nick and Will and Ned to fight against, if you fight: and the barn, mended by yourself: and your two-dozen packs, disguised in fleeces bearing your own Yottenfews mark—an item you overlooked, perhaps? I misdoubt, your scale dips wrong way!"

"So this pup must damn me? Let him dare try! He'll find he has damned his own neck in advance, sheltering *you*——!" He turned on me, hatefully: "Be warned, you young jacka-

napes ! Smuggling's a venial charge, as against harbouring traitors. I advise you, inquire what sort of purge the Duke has made in the north, before you meddle ! ”

“ That cock won't fight ” says my father. “ I'm dead, seven months ago ; to convict anyone of harbouring me you'll have to prove me alive ; and though I'm here to-night, to-morrow I shall be gone . . . like you.”

Our enemy stared at us without speaking ; and for all he had tried to brazen out his case, it was clear he knew himself beat. “ You mean—you'd hound me from England ? ”

“ Very sure, I will——” But now my father's voice grew hard, and his stern glance removed from Eldon to myself and back to Eldon again, as he went on : “ For the malice you've borne me, I owe you no grudge ; we can't select our kin, more's the pity. But for the way you've used this boy of mine—by God I'd shoot you very cheerfully if I thought the shooting worth while.”

At the door, Will fingered his pistol.

“ You have saved me that inconvenience, though. Now you may hear my terms. For the present, you bide here—do not hope you will be missed, you have rode to Keswick, I'm told—till our dispositions are settled. Then you march : leaving certain guarantees, which we'll take care you respect.”

“ You steal Bigrigg too, then ? ” he faltered. My father shook his head.

“ You'd have sold Bigrigg, either way. Nick's found you a purchaser——” On which cue, I told him without bargaining the price which Isaac had named. His eyes swung to me.

“ You're ready at every point, I see——” No doubt he guessed my buyer's identity ; but I can well believe, the price was more than he had dared to expect. “ And your payment ? ”

“ You'll receive interest on that, and on whatsoever stocks apart from Yottenfews you may hold, for so long as you don't molest us.”

“ Not the principal ? ”

“ Neither that principal nor any other ” my father assured him flatly. “ We shall hold 'em as guarantees. When the Indemnity's proclaimed—'twill follow close on the September assize, I think—and I'm here unassailable to combat any action you take, we'll remit you the principals.”

“ But—but I'm altogether at your mercy, that way ! ”

“ So you are any way ” my father reminded him. “ One of

us has to trust the other, Don—and I'll back my probity against yours."

He said, after a long silence : " And suppose I refuse ? I meet your challenge, I hold Yottenfews legally ; I lay no information on your escape, nor you none on my smuggling ? You're stalemated, I think."

Will spoke ; he'd kept his peace all this while. " Thou'll not last long there " he said grimly. " Thou'd have been dead meat months ago, but for t' young lad ! "

Eldon sat pensive for the space of many minutes, staring upon the ground. My father puffed at his pipe. Mice nibbled, we could hear rain murmuring at the gutters, and the Dutch clock wagging next door. Sometimes Will and I exchanged glances. At last, Eldon raised his eyes to us.

" Your terms will suit me " he said.

Now to Will and myself, who had watched their duel as folk sit and watch a play, this seemed the end of the matter ; and I suppose if I had any knack of story-making, my story should end here. But lord knows, romancing and the prosy traffick of life are very different affairs ; and what next followed was that Eldon and my father fell arguing, for all the world like two attorneys with some law-dispute to adjust. Paradise grinned at me from the bed—he'd read my thought, and the anticlimax diverted him. Only Will, who had no romantick tendency, sat listening as dour as ever.

There was much to contract : first the farm to be legally transferred to me, and our money at Pardshaw's and what he owed me for the oaks—I held his note-of-hand for that, but he'd not yet paid me ; the sale of Bigrigg to be authorised through my agency, and the price placed to my account ; all revenues outside Bigrigg and the farm to be payable to myself, from what source soever, and their stocks lodged with me . . . They kept at it, far into the night : my father checking each detail. When at last they agreed, Eldon must draft the whole as an instruction to his lawyers at Egremont : which they should re-draft in their proper jargon, for me. I wondered continually, by what means we'd make sure even now that Eldon removed himself. But here he forestalled us. For when he'd signed and handed over the instrument, he leaned back, and looking at us disdainfully :

" I hope " says he " your machinations won't require you to

hold me too long? My ship clears Whitehaven this week—and my passage is booked already.”

We stared, our surprise tempered with mistrust. He perceived it. “I’ve endured your black-mail so patiently” he shrugged, “that I beg you’ll grant me my say. You win—yet less disastrously to me than you pride yourself. Bigrigg goes: claim no triumph there, ’twas dead anyhow. Had luck run different—had your brat fetched the Lindale secret home—I might have tossed him back his farm very willingly; for my heart never could have been in sheep, no more than in contraband—gainful though that has proved.” He took his snuff, and continued: “I’ve lived on tenter hooks these three years. After each cargo, I have had my passage-money drawn and an outgoing ship in mind. Each time, I’ve foreseen betrayal: which whether it comes from the most evident source——” his glance flickered to Paradise—“or from blind chance as you assure me, I am not caught unprepared——”

Will muttered at my ear: “Mind t’ old fox, there’s some trick in him——” But I watched Eldon’s eyes; they kindled, with that fanatick light I had seen in them when he first talked of his iron. He went on:

“Bigrigg defeated me: Bigrigg, not you. My hopes grew elsewhere as they died here: overseas—Pennsylvania, Pittsburg: mere names to you, eh? But the future of iron lies there. Coke may save England’s trade, or mayn’t; ’tis not proved yet. Yonder’s the *el dorado*!” His voice warmed; he said vehemently: “I’ve lands bought, which you can’t touch. I’ve skill and knowledge and experience to outrival these colonists—for they’re in infancy; but they’ve a twofold wealth, untapped, where *we*’re drained empty: iron ore, and timber—timber by the thousand mile! Believe me, there’ll be a score of fortunes made there in this our lifetime, by men less able than I!” He laughed, and yawned. “I grow tedious? Forgive me. I’d say merely, plotting my overthrow, you’ve maybe launched me on the finest enterprise in the world, and be damned to you . . . and now by your leave, I’ll sleep.”

He’d begun pulling off his boots, while he talked. Now he wrapped himself in his riding-cloak and lay down against the wall. My father looked at me mutely. For though our triumph was absolute—though we’d won back our lands and driven him out and stricken him impotent—yet in his queer way he’d contrived to blunt our conceit, and left us respecting him, and made

us feel somehow small : which no doubt was what he intended . . . only old Paradise just then pulled me down close to him ; and in my father's own voice, " *We* have your principals, brother ! " he whispered solemnly : and so, chuckling, balanced our scale.

Our candle guttered. Will reached from his seat against the door and replenished us with a fresh one, as though he meant to risk no surprises : then resumed his dour vigil, with the pistol ostentatiously on his knees. I lay under the window. At last : " Good-night, Don ! " I heard my father say, in a sort of embarrassment.

" Good-night t'ye, brother ! " he returned sleepily and very amiably, not opening his eyes. My father stretched himself on the settle. . . . And of all I had witnessed this strange night, nothing seemed stranger than the calm propinquity of the pair of them, sleeping within arm's length. " The lion lay down with the lamb " Paradise put it, long afterwards : " the riddle solely, to discriminate which was which——"

XLVII

THE REST is soon told. In the morning Ned was dispatched for Keswick directly, with a letter from Paradise to the factor he dealt with there. No need (he told us) to delay our marketing for his health's sake. He'd writ, an unforeseen mischance had diverted the cargo to Ennerdale : whence the factor must now collect it for himself, and deduct the cost from his price. The balance—and a huge sum it was, I could scarce trust my ears when Paradise told it us—the balance must be paid down *ex tempore* to our agent in Ennerdale, in whose charge the stuff lay. " And they'll stand by this ? " asked my father. Paradise laughed. " Don't fear, sir. In our trade we observe a scrupulosity which a city-merchant would gape at ; we'd soon be dislocated otherwise—in every sense of the word ! "

Will and my father stopped with Eldon. For myself, I was sent off on a round of errands : first into Egremont, to Eldon's lawyers who looked mighty thunderclapt when they read what I brought. They wanted to question me. But I told them, as I'd been bid, that my uncle was severing his connection with Cumberland ; and that for details, they'd find those sufficiently

set out in the instruction he'd sent through me ; and that my orders were not to discuss the matter at all, but to urge them to hurry it : which the instruction itself bore out.

Next down to Whitehaven, to close with the ship-owners : and to say that (the weather seeming now set-calm) Mr. Fleming would be obliged, and would compensate them accordingly, if the ship could lie-to off Caldermouth and take him aboard there. They assented, naming their hour. Then to Yottenfews, with a note for his valet saying merely that he had a journey to make, and required such-and-such packed. Lastly, next day, to Drigg near Ravenglass to seek out an old friend of our family, whose boat fished off that shore : who when I'd breathed a certain piece of news to him, promised gladly to help us.

I was back two or three more times to Egremont, before the lawyers were done. At last they delivered me a great sealed bundle of documents, which my father and Paradise checked together ; my uncle signed them, the same night ; and in the morning (Hannah having washed and pressed his lace, very unwillingly) he made ready to ride with us to the shore.

He took leave of my father indoors. Five nights back, at their long talk, they'd achieved almost a sort of comradeship ; but in the interim (both prisoners, cooped up together) this had worn brittle, and they parted I think in neither friendship nor enmity, but only with a vast relief on both sides. And when Eldon offered some disdainful comment on his satisfaction in leaving this barren unblest land, my father said curtly : " A land's what you make it, Don. If you part gladly, I'm glad too—you're less apt to grudge our possession."

My uncle looked at him from the door. " Oh believe me " says he, " I grudge you nothing : except—" he paused ; for the instant, maybe, his sensibility had near betrayed him into speaking the truth ; but he saved himself, twisting it to a sneer : "—except, perhaps, the very steadfast complicity of your friends !"

We rode down to Yottenfews : Eldon, Will and I. At the house I espied his black-browed servant peeping from a top window. Eldon gave him no sign, only desired me to fetch the trunk out ; and this we carried to the beach, Eldon walking in front of us. The tide was past flood, so we supposed his ship must have cleared harbour. Quite soon we sighted her, creeping along inshore. We launched our dinghy from Calder-

mouth, and pulled out to intercept her, over a flat sea. As we drew near she luffed into the wind, and they hailed us to cease rowing ; her counter came edging towards us, and I hooked fast.

They flung a rope for his trunk. When they'd hauled that aboard, Will reached him a hand but he ignored it and went nimbly up the ladder, his black coat-tails flapping. He had not given us a word since we fetched his trunk from the house, neither while waiting on the beach nor afterwards in the dinghy. He climbed inboard, and vanished.

We heard an order from the ship, and feet pattering. Her blocks creaked, and she shook out more canvas, leaned a little, and began to draw away from us gently. Will took the pistol from his bosom and laid it beneath the thwart. Then we pulled home.

Late that night we rode out to Ravenglass, my father wearing a plain coat of Will's with his hat over his eyes. Some of their windows were still lit, and maybe a blind might stir, but none challenged us. At the street-end a figure slipped out of the shadows ahead, and beckoned us down the shingle. A fisher-boat nosed inshore. . . .

More than once, as we returned to where we had left our horses, Will and I paused to exchange a word with folk who gave us good-night. "Thou's home for good, then?" one would say ; or another : "What, t' finish caps all——!" My father's name was not spoken. They may have known the truth, or may not. But there's one thing they know expertly in sly Ravenglass : that is, how to mind their own business.

Not many days after, we fetched Paradise to Yottenfews where he could sit beneath his tree and get strength. One evening returning I slipped in by the back way to wash, and so passed to the living-room. A golden, breathless eve it was ; the casements stood open ; outside, I heard Paradise :

"——Nothing, save the bare fact ! He's the most bashfullest Romeo I e'er came across. We're informed merely, travelling abroad, he met an angel in his way like the ass of Scripture—only, ours is still dumb !" A little quick laugh answered . . . then I was outdoors at a bound, for I recognised my Faith's voice.

She sat with old Isaac by the sycamore, hearing Paradise

talk. And while I hung awkward—for I knew she'd not have me embrace her in front of them—"Well, lad" says Isaac, "this is a grand tale thy friend relateth us—thy cup brimmeth over, eh?" And smiling: "I doubt, thou's room for no more happiness—eh dear, I might as well have left t' lass at home!"

I said: "She's home, here . . ."

He had ridden north as soon as his affairs allowed, on receipt of my letter. To-morrow he purported to view Bigrigg, and deliver Pardshaw the price. "Thou'll can show this lass Yottenfews, meanwhile—and she'll show *thee* the first few dozen things she wants alterin'——!"

"Nay, father" Faith blushed, smiling across at me. "The place will do as it is!"

At supper by and by, she announced: "There's news yet, Nick. Ask Mr. Paradise!"

"'Tis naught" he demurred. But on my pressing him, he confirmed what he had told them already: that my old tyrant, the Head Master at Saint Bees, was hanging his ferule up; and the post was offered to him. "Aye, I'm accepting it" says he a little ruefully. "*Cedant arma togae*—the running-trade has now died on me; rot it, I'll need the wherewithal to buy my own tobacco henceforth."

Isaac said: "Thou'll be needin' a wife an' all!"

"No sir, by Artemis! I'll enjoy my earned peace—and let posterity shift for itself, as Mr. Congreve advises."

We sat on the fellside above Thornholm, whence the land slopes to the sea. Old Isaac joined us. He'd spent the livelong day at Bigrigg, he said, when the lawyer-business was settled; it was all he'd hoped it, and more. "A Land of Promise! Some day, riches will come easy there: maybe too easy . . . my mind's troubled, Nick. There's a hard riddle tied up in this iron-country of thine."

"For us?"

He looked at me sideways. "Wilt *thou* work it?"

"Nay, my job's with the sheep. I've hoped, John would."

"John's leavin' us——" he said curtly. I glanced at Faith who sat pensive, her chin cupped in her hand. I felt some trouble here, not yet spoken. He began talking of John. "The lad's heart-set on Coalbrookdale—thou knows, they're Friends there, like us; and they've made coke longer. But coke's nowt and never will be nowt, the way we handle it. 'Tis the blast

beats us ; horse-power, wind-power, water-power, we've tried all ; it mun be steam-machines, John says—steam ! He's made his draft : him and Dick Ford of Coalbrookdale, that he wants me to take partner. But there's years o' work to it yet. If it comes right, some day our John'll build a fortune coke-smeltin' . . . but he'll build it in Coalbrookdale, and not here."

"Yet you've bought Bigrigg, Isaac ?" The old man shook his head.

"Thine and Faith's . . . what, has t' lass not told thee yet ? I've bought in your name : cash in t' bank, for the bairns——" By and by he continued, thoughtful : "Eldon Fleming was wrong. There'll be more wealth from t' local iron, some day, nor he'll ever make in America : and at Bigrigg peculiarly, where the Lord hath ordained so close a fellowship between His coal and His ore. But He'll take time, however ; He's got a riddle up His sleeve for us—but He's not axin' it yet." He fell silent, brooding over the green plain like some Hebrew prophet of old. From here it seemed passing fair : cornland and pastureland and orchard ; the ironmines, dotted among these, no longer visible as day waned ; nor no smoke hardly, save a smutch over Whitehaven, since trade was worsening month by month and their furnaces mostly idle ; and beyond them on Solway, a great crimson splendour spilling out of the west—there are no sunsets like our Solway ones in all England, travelled folk say. Isaac pointed :

"Sithee, *yon's* Coalbrookdale ! Coalbrookdale as it used to be, afore the cokin' begun—and afore that again, it was no more'n a little country forge, time out of memory ; and oaks and hazels grew as thick as grass from there to the Wrekin ; but the ironmasters scatted 'em up."

I nodded. "That's Bigrigg's story."

"Coalbrookdale's didn't stop there. Nor Bigrigg's won't, neether. Last year in Coalbrookdale I saw what the coke-smelters had made of it : their ovens innumerable ; their workmen's hovels trailin' over the sooted hills ; their chimney-forests, their new busy furnaces that turn night into day and day into night ; their mines, no more open-cast in the Lord's eye, but galleried under ground, with their slag-heaps and rubbish-heaps devourin' His green pastures. . . . In Bigrigg a while back, such things began to be ; now for another while, they've over-shot themselves and are stayed ; if coke comes, they'll start again—and there'll be no stayin' 'em."

Faith sighed : " Oh, I'd grieve, seeing *this* land fouled ! "

" Thou's wrong, lass ; that's not the riddle ! Iron's a mucky trade, thou knows—and He knows, Who taught us it. There mun be muck-spots, where we toil for Him : and green-spots, where others do His different will—I reckon both are fair, in His sight . . . but folk count for more than spots ! It's His folk, my heart's vexed for." He turned to me. " Our John's busy puzzlin' out machines to do the labour of man—and who knows where *they'll* lead us ? "

" To much wealth, Eldon said——"

" Aye, for us—us that owns the land ! But what matter ? Thou and I've got wealth enough ; it's the lads that sweat for us, I've in mind. Will machines better *them* ? "

" If John's right."

He nodded. " John says, machines'll bring such a prosperity as England has never dreamt ; and the humblest'll share in it, he says, the machines easin' their burden ; and through more ampler wages and condition of life, they'll improve from brutes into men. . . . But if John's not right, eh ? If the tide lifts us only, and drowns them ? If they're so slaved and sweated in our scramble for wealth that their brutishness still increases—— ? Maybe their generation had been better left to starve, and have no posterity : as they're starvin' down there, this day ! "

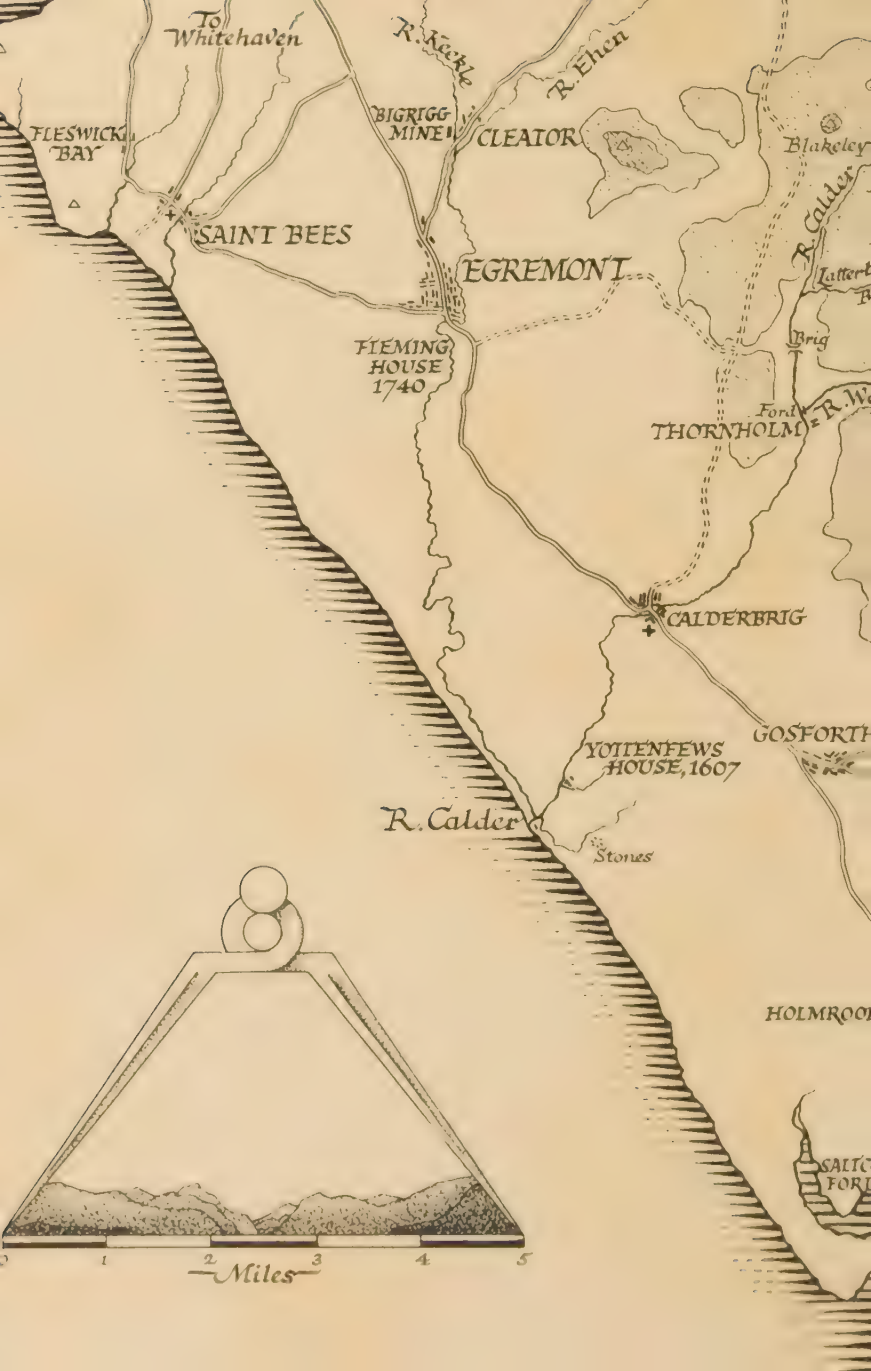
" That's a hard question, Isaac."

" The hardest I know. And the Lord hath shown me no answer ; likely He reckons there's no need to fash Himself about us. I'll be called home, before His riddle is answerable : and thou thrang with good king David's trade. Yet some day somebody's got to answer it."

Faith whispered : " He must guide our bairns' choice."

" He will ! He's had more practice at such riddles nor us : and a better head on Him. Eh, He'll manage, don't fear. . . ."

The sunset began to fade. We sat still, not speaking any more, while dusk grew and Bigrigg darkened from green into bronze. Then we walked down towards Yottenfews, through the evening.







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